Shannon

THROUGH WONDERFUL INDIA AND BEYOND

THE SULAY PAGODA, RANGOON

THROUGH WONDERFUL INDIA AND BEYOND

BY

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With 17 Illustrations

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TO THE
HESITATING FELLOW-TRAVELLER
WHOM THE FASCINATIONS OF INDIA
CONVERTED INTO AN ENTHUSIAST,
THIS ACCOUNT OF SIX HAPPY MONTHS
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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THROUGH WONDERFUL INDIA AND BEYOND

CHAPTER I

ON BOARD THE "PERSIA"

THE secret gates which divide east from west have opened. We are across the threshold of lands that to most of us, through ancestral memory, must surely hold some strangely familiar thing—a scent perhaps; or a sound. The echo of a song, or the vision of a deserted temple.

The sun, that had made of our last autumnal day in England a thing of beauty, is flooding with light and colour this flat sordid Eastern port, so that it seems some vast palace of dreams, all pale rose and gold, afloat on a tideless sea. A thing surely of mirage, that must fade in the light of reality. Before us lies a thin long line of white houses, an immense cupola, and a fringe of palms . . . Port Saïd; and so blinding is the light, that the countries of mist, and the blue-black eternity of waters that

lie behind us, seem now things of the imagination. Here, we are engulfed in colour, and in light, fragile as blown glass, and warm as velvet.

On landing we found ourselves in long straight streets, and passed little hutch-like shops heaped with coloured stuffs, from which men in red fez rose to entreat inspection. The shrill babel of Eastern voices sounded in our ears. The strange pungent odour of the bazaars floated in the air. An odour not unpleasant, though probably compounded of things strangely unpleasant in the eyes of Westerners!

Presently we strayed into a garden sweet with clumps of oleanders and pomegranates, and sat there to rest till the sky grew pale rose through the palm leaves. Five days before I had watched the sun sink over an English common in a wild riot of crimson and gold. Bare branches of trees had swayed black against a molten sky, and the violet mist of the November evening had held more than a touch of frost. Only five days ago, and yet already we were in another world! What does it hold in store for us?

Quickly we walked through the short Eastern twilight to the Savoy Hotel, that quaint little Turko-Egyptian caravanserai that lies on the Quay; such a very poor relation of the mighty head of its tribe on the Thames.

NATIVE MUSICIANS

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My thoughts rushed back to the January day when we had stopped here for an hour and had tea, waiting for our train to Cairo. How remote it all seemed now.

At eleven next morning we weighed anchor, and the last thing I saw as we left Port Saïd was the life-sized figure of M. Lesseps, towering above the jetty against the intense blue of the sky. Great man, in whose brain was conceived the daring plan of cutting a silver water-way through a hundred miles of desert! Slowly . . . very, very slowly . . . under a limpid sky profoundly blue . . . we glided due south. Except through the lakes, six miles is the speed limit, for terrible can be the havoc that a big liner brings to the walled banks of the canal. Slowly . . . very slowly. No sound, scarcely a movement broke the dreamlike monotony. On either side lay a golden world of sand and empty spaces. Narrow groves of bamboo and pampas grass brushed the water. Here and there a lebbek or blue gum tree threw inky pools of shadow on the grass and every few miles came a " station," with its black posts and silver wires, to flash the message of civilisation across thousands of miles of desert land.

About seven we passed Ismailia, a flare of lights

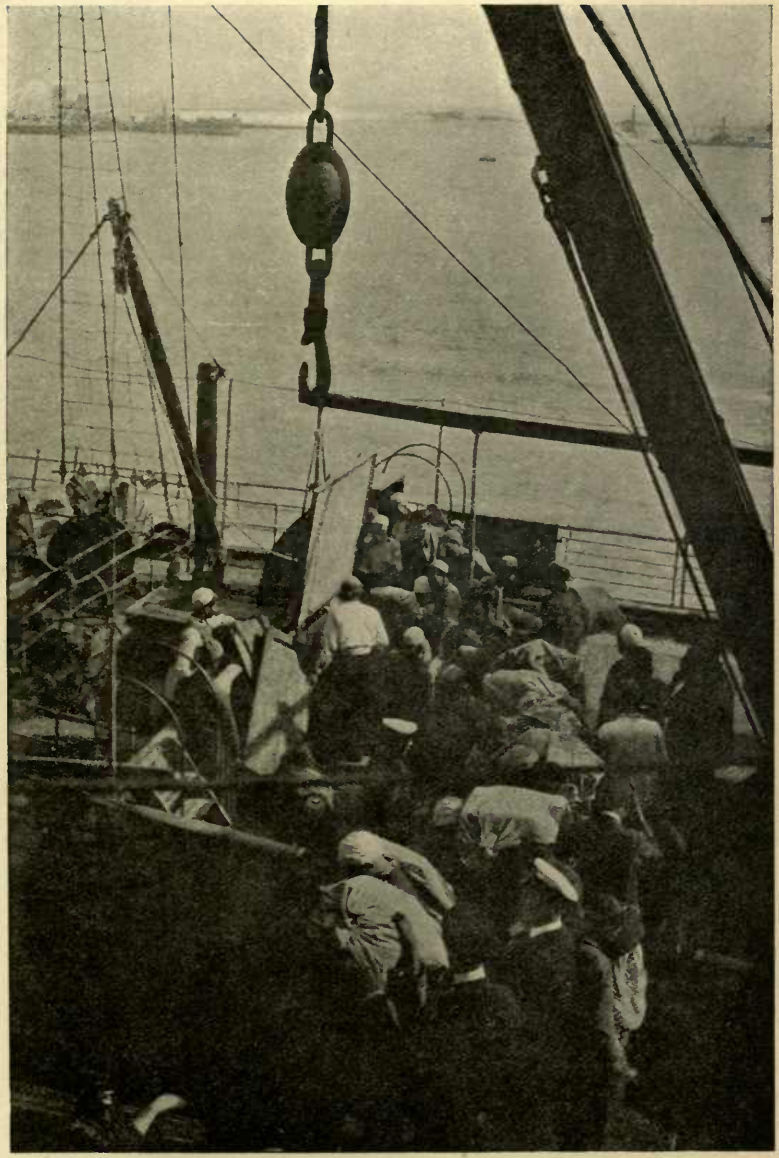
in the darkness. A crowd of naked figures stood on the quay, dancing against the fires lit low on the water-side. They seemed scarcely human; spirits rather of the under-world through which our ship of fate was taking us with slow inevitability.

Pale moonlight falls now on either bank, fringed with cactus, palm and pampas grass; and beyond lies the white desolation of the desert, more utterly lonely than any sea. We are in the Bitter Lakes, that once were known as the Gulf of Hereopolis; part of the Red Sea in those days. Tradition has it that here the Children of Israel passed over from Egypt on their forty years wandering in the wilderness. Gaunt mountains lie back against the sky . . . desert hills and defiles. Far across the waste comes the cry of the jackall and hyena.

I close my port-hole, for the sound of that pitiful sobbing is terribly human.

Light! Light! And yet more light!

From sea to sky we are steeped in blue light, clear and as fine as a fairy's web. It is noon in the Gulf of Suez. To our northern eyes the radiance seems something beyond belief, as if we had wandered by mistake into the interior of a casket of mother-of-pearl. On either side lies a world of dead mountains, pitiful travesty of a world that might be, but that never has been. Beyond this is an ocean



LANDING THE MAILS AT PORT SAÏD

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of sand, of desolations unspeakable that can harbour few living things and that can bring forth—nothing. No sound reaches us; no cry of joy or sorrow. Yet beyond those scarred defiles winds the caravan track that leads from Egypt to Syria, past the site of the ancient city of Daphne; " Taphnes " of the Book of Jusith.

In silence this rampart of a dead world guards the secrets of a race and a religion long since vanished beyond the rim of time; and we leave it red-gold in the sunlight, as if it were lit by internal fires.

We are launched now on the smooth oily waves of the Red Sea. The air is thick and scorched. Presently a little wind rises, making of the heat a thing of delight. The crew went into white " by order " at Suez, and the decks of the " Persia " look gay with bright colours and parasols. Slowly the punkas sway to and fro, and those passengers with cabins on the " cool " side talk of their good fortune to those inhabiting the " hot " side.

" But I like the heat," maintained a magenta faced lady of ample proportions. Appearances are very deceitful! Burly young Englishmen and muscular English girls play the regulation deck games with astonishing earnestness.

" You English are a wonderful people," began the little Frenchman.

" Yes? " I said tentatively. It is always amus-

ing to hear a Continental nation on the Islander. They so love to discuss us; and once the varnish of polite society is rubbed off—which soon happens in the enforced intimacy of board-ship life—they will tell us such extraordinary things.

" You talk of your English 'comfort.' But I ask . . . where is it? Look at your young girls! They forsake their deck chairs, their cushions, their novels, and play games . . . in this heat! and not merely ' pour le flirt ' but seriously! With each other! Their faces red, their hair in disorder. And not only young girls but mothers of families! Look at that aged lady, with glasses and a wisp of grey hair encircling her one hairpin! She can neither talk, read, enjoy the good air and this blue marvellous sea for fear of losing her turn to throw a miniature life-buoy over a miniature peg! And that tall man of serious mien. He must be intelligent since he occupies the position in India which is his. And yet he has not time to talk, to discuss. He must always be playing with a little ball! You seem to be afraid of discussion in England. You can chatter, or you can be silent, but you do not like to talk."

" We are a nation of workers," I said.

" True, Madame, but all work must originate in thought, and thought needs to be expressed, especially now-a-days. For the age is now a mental

rather than a material one, and consequently 'to be ' is more important than ' to do.' Still . . . I know in England this is not so. Everyone is very ' affairré.' In your streets there are no ' flaneurs ' as in Paris. They go about their business or pleasure with faces so set and serious. Even in the cafés . . . they do not talk or laugh much. I know, for I was in England last August for nearly a fortnight, first at Cowes, then in London. Ah, your hotels! With their omelettes resembling sponges, bûf-steaks that necessitate . . . well, necessitate what we call ' dents a l'Anglais,' and no looking glasses in the bathrooms! I fled precipitately to London. There the hotels are better. They possess sometimes French cooks and waiters. But the theatres! Naturally I was obliged to go to the musical ones, because I do not understand English, and I was told—and I could see for myself—that since these are about nothing in particular it matters not whether one understands or no."

" And what did you think of them? "

" That the chorus girls were allowed to show too many teeth. They were always smiling . . . it was very tiring to watch them. Then the ' salle ' was so dark. One could see nothing. Not that there was much to see, for even during the entr'acte the ladies kept their cloaks about their shoulders. No one circulated amongst his friends to chat with

this one or that. The men made a rush for the bar, and the unfortunate ladies remained stiffly in their seats. Ah! It is not gay, an English theatre."

I tried to explain that after all one usually went to the theatre to see the play, a thing rendered well-nigh impossible in Paris owing to the lights being allowed to burn brilliantly, but all he replied was:

" In your heart, Madame, I am sure you agree with me. Why, see how you are all fleeing your country. One finds the English in every corner of the world. Some of them spend their whole lives in avoiding their mother-land."

" A few," I answered. " But most of them are about their country's business. Take this ship for instance. Almost every one is going to these distant lands, not for his own pleasure, but to keep the British flag flying over some little corner of the world. There is something fine it seems to me, in this sense of utter disregard of personal welfare in the face of national welfare."

At two this afternoon the engines slowed down and an amiable looking old gentleman boarded the " Persia." He was the pilot, and into his hands was confided the intricate task of guiding us into the bay of Aden.

On either side of us rose barren looking mountains, jagged as the teeth of some wild beast, and scorched the colour of burnt sienna. As they stood up stark against a sky of molten blue they reminded us of the back-scene to some Drury Lane melodrama. On the west are islands enclosing the narrow strait still more closely, beyond which lies Somaliland of evil memories. On the east is the promontory of Aden—five miles long and two and a half broad, pushing its way into the sea like the snout of some sea-monster. In all the length and breadth of this British possession there is not one blade of grass, nor sign of any green thing! And yet by virtue of its position how well worth a thing it is to possess, standing as it does at the very gateway to the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea.

From a man who has but lately returned from the interior I gathered that—properly worked—an important future lies before Aden. It is hot, but not unhealthy, say those who know it best. Besides, two fertile valleys lie behind Aden, that of the Hadkramont, and that of the Gara Mountains, and it would not be impossible to connect these places with Aden by means of a light desert railway. The Turkish frontier has been clearly defined now, and the once turbulent tribes—the Abdalas and the Fadhlis, who gave the British so much trouble between the years 1839 and 1867—have abandoned

hostilities, and testify to-day, poor things, in crude gold lettering on a crimson ground, that they " love King George and Queen Mary, and are happy under British rule "; a remnant of the royal rejoicings, when the sovereigns passed through Aden on their way to the Durbar.

The big liners anchor about five hundred yards off " Post Office Pier," and very soon we were seated in an unwieldy looking native craft being rowed across by half-a-dozen cheery faced negroes, their white teeth flashing into smiles that suggested chalk marks drawn across a blackboard. At the stern sat a brilliant creature, a " masher " of some desert city, in shawl-like skirts of gorgeous colouring, with a muslin shirt tied in at the waist with an orange and blue scarf, over which hung a multitude of glass beads. On his shaved head was a red tasselled cap, and in his hand a dapper little cane. He swaggered on shore with a child-like complacency in his own appearance which was wholly delightful, and we followed humbly in his rear, surrounded by a shrieking, laughing, good-tempered crowd of nude bronze figures. A faint odour of musk, palm-oil, and crushed cocoa-nut hung in the clear dry air. Specimens from every part of Asia surrounded us. Egyptians, shock-headed Somalis, hideous and grotesque Nubians and Swahili from the coast of East Africa, wild Arabs from far dis-

ADEN

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tant desert-lands in the heart of Asia, Indians, Turks, Negroes. Most of them were hideous beyond words, and looked as if they had been badly corked for a fancy-dress ball, or to figure in a nigger entertainment on Margate pier. Their clothes were as various as their appearance and manners. One gentleman I noticed arrayed in a smartly cut tussore coat, beneath which flowed a coral-pink muslin skirt and stockings of pale blue silk. Others wore long draperies of beautiful coloured silks over transparent camisoles. Turbans were of every hue, and ear and nose-rings gorgeous in uncut, barbaric splendour. All the women were closely veiled, and not, as in Egypt and Turkey, " pour mieux se déviner "! Some of the veils were of scarlet cotton, giving a ghastly suggestion to the small faces.

We passed by a long row of native shops, and a couple of greasy, out-of-elbow looking hotels, in the bars of which lounged that peculiar type of half-breed that one sees at every sea-port in Africa. At the back of the hotels are the huge Government condensers, which, together with an aqueduct at Shiekh Ottiman, supply water to Aden. The annual rainfall is small, something like six to seven inches, but in these tanks, built centuries ago and restored by the British Government in 1856, can be stored Aden's yearly water supply!

We drove out to see them, along five miles of

level, dusty road running parallel to the harbour where lies the fleet of every nation. Presently the sandy track curved sharply upwards to an immense rock archway, pointed as the tooth of some ferocious animal. Below, the opening widened sufficiently to allow a carriage to pass through—a veritable "eye of a needle," and we were in a wild sandy region, with rocks piled an immense height against a sky of molten blue. A volcanic country, desolate beyond words, in which lay a large camp surrounded by high walls and a native village.

CHAPTER II

BOMBAY

"Six o'clock, Madam." I started up to find the ship's cat mewing round me, and my steward ready to take my bedding down to the cabin. Flinging on a cloak, I scrambled to my feet and walked towards the side of the ship.

The sky was a pale sea-green, in which rents seemed to have been made to admit the light of the stars; stars that reminded me of the Christmas cards of my childhood. Below the green was a deep soft flush of rose, then a bar of gold, against which purple black hills and islands stood out as if on cardboard. India! They were India!

A little wind played softly round my forehead, and beneath its freshness lay something inexpressibly sweet; something warm, alluring. The scent

seemed in some strange way familiar. It recalled . . . For a moment I felt puzzled. Then . . . I remembered. The door had been left ajar into the conservatory of the world.

The opalescent water slipped by noiselessly. Mountain islands slowly emerged from the mist of starry dawn. Emerged with the half-uttered secrets of the East, secrets terrible and beautiful and that only the heart and imagination can ever hope to understand. The islands are India's guardians, Salsette, and Dravi, and Trombay . . . twelve in all.

Suddenly a brilliant light leapt across the narrowing waters from Bombay's giant lighthouse. It was India's first message to us.

Swiftly the sky deepened to an intenser red. The bows came gradually into colour, their masts and rigging cutting sharply against the background. Indigo blue figures in red turbans moved noiselessly here and there, and again, as so often during the voyage, I was reminded of the first act of Tristan.

Every moment the light grew stronger . . . deeply purple . . . pale amethyst . . . tender grey . . . finally . . . in one stupendous moment the whole sprang into being. I could see chain upon chain of islands rising and falling till they seemed to join hands in a wide semi-circle round the white city of Bombay—a medley of low houses,

wharves, mosques, slender Hindu temples, towers and cupolas dipped in the brilliance of a golden haze that almost blinded me. The sweet subtle scent, slightly aromatic and yet heavy with the more sickly odour of flowers that suggests so instantly—India—to all who know her; the tepid air, strangely vital and yet like velvet, excited me. India! That small five lettered word that all my life had spelt for me romance, was there across the strip of waters.

The " Persia," that had for so many days and nights ploughed her way through varying seas was anchored at last. A short while ago it had not seemed possible that I should ever visit this far-distant land except in dreams. Even on board-ship, with every throb of the screw carrying us further East, I would sometimes shut my eyes and wonder whether I should not open them to the drip of rain against the window panes, and the sight of bare branches against a leaden sky.

And now, the sun burnt us, we were engulfed in golden light: the clamour of strange voices filled the air. The P. & O. launch was taking us swiftly across to the long narrow landing stage where, for one brief instant every week, India touches " Home." Then, a sea of dark faces encompassed us, out of which emerged here and there a white face glowing with expectancy, scanning so eagerly the rows of

oncoming passengers for the wife or child sent away from the horrors of an Indian "hot weather."

These are the tragedies of life in India, inevitably bound up with the glamour and the beauties of this alien land.

As I walked along the landing stage, A. in front with the luggage, a bearded, bright-eyed, olive-complexioned man in a white turban and spotless linen separated himself from the surrounding crowd of chattering, gesticulating natives, and with a deep salaam handed me a letter, pointing to the address in an inquiring way. I looked at it, nodded, and he salaamed again even more profoundly, saying: "I am your servant."

"Ah . . . very well." And I looked at the letter again, and then told him to follow me quickly.

This was evidently Mahomed Das whom we had engaged from England as our "Bearer."

I walked a little further in the blinding sunshine, amid a medley of colour and strange humanity, dazed with the wonder of it all, feeling that at last, and for the first time, in spite of previous experience of Egypt and Morocco, I had stepped into one of the tales of Haroon Al Raschid. A minute later another turbaned, white-robed individual stood before me, salaaming to the ground and presenting a second "chit." He also announced himself as my servant. I gazed in consternation, and then

pointing at Mahomed explained that he was our servant.

The second white turbaned one shook his head.

" Mem-Sahib read my ' chit.' I engaged by Sahib Graham. That one no your servant."

Dismayed, I opened the note he had handed me. It was true. He was our servant. He had been engaged by our friends who, travelling " up country," had missed our letter telling them that we had already engaged Mahomed Das.

It was an awkward moment, for the two men, each looking upon the other as an imposter, were glaring at each other and then outvieing one another in the profundity of their salaams, regardless of the jostling of an indifferent crowd.

" I am the mem-sahib's servant," they repeated simultaneously.

" Well . . . come and see the Sahib," I answered, and they fell behind, following me up the long pier.

A moment later, out from the line of brown legs and arms and turbaned heads, rushed a little figure in a white and gold-edged " sari." She salaamed, her fingers to her forehead, and held out a note for my inspection.

" This is the ayah that Mem-Sahib Graham has engaged for the Mem," she said softly.

" Oh . . . is it," I said nervously, fearing that now would commence a descent of Ayahs. She attached herself to the tail of the procession, and we joined A. at the baggage office. The three surrounded him and salaamed.

" Who on earth are these people? " he asked, his temper slightly ruffled from difficult encounters with baggage officials.

I explained, and he shrugged his shoulders and made a few caustic remarks. Then we went outside into the blinding sunshine, and the two bearers demonstrated their desire to serve us by each calling a " tikka gharry." This being one too many, since we had been told to call later for our heavy luggage, a lively altercation ensued between the two drivers and the two bearers, which in my experience I imagined could only end in murder.

" Oh, hang the whole lot of you! " exclaimed A., and he flung our baggage into one of the carriages, pushed me after it, and told the driver to go to the Taj Mahal Hotel. Our three servants threw themselves in as best they could, and we rattled away past colossal white buildings of splendid proportions, and in many cases finely architectured, and down broad European streets filled to over-flow with a kaleidoscope of colour, and lined with palms and gorgeous flowering shrubs. Here seemed to be represented every type of nationality. A fierce

jostling of creeds, colour, and civilization. For we talk so easily of " India," as if it were a definite country as England is, or France; forgetting that it is a continent the size of two-thirds of Europe and containing four hundred separate languages and at least fifteen to twenty separate races! Indeed one's first sensation in an Indian city is that of utter bewilderment. It seems composed of a crowd far denser and more diversified than one finds in the streets of London or Paris. Black-bearded men from the far north-west; Sikhs, Pathans, Rajputs; Mahrattas; bullet-headed Goanese; Parsees innumerable, in their black-varnished unbrimmed hats, high as a Western " tall hat," and as ugly. Here is the " Bhistie," naked for the most part, carrying his goatskin of fresh water. There a gold-turbaned Princeling, in white satin trousers, a green brocaded coat and diamond necklace. At the corner stands the Parawalla, a native edition of our familiar " Bobby." He makes a grotesque figure, this protector of our persons, with his timid gestures of command and his frightened air should a " tikka gharry " drive very near his sandaled feet. The streets seemed crowded to suffocation with bronze-coloured figures jostling one against the other, squatting cross-legged in their shops, or lying in some patch of shade. A moving stream of colour—purple, rose, green; the men in pugarees of every

shape and tint, the women in gorgeous " saris," drawn closely about their lithe forms and then upwards to the oval faces and small shapely heads, the silver bangles on arm and ankle striking a flash of light as they walk. Nothing, in this our first drive, seemed very real. One felt as if one were in some gigantic fancy dress fete under a fierce glare of limelight.

The Taj-Mahal Hotel is an immense white building, standing back from the street in a garden of its own.

Here official India meets, and stares coldly at tourist India. As each Friday comes round the latest P. & O. from " Home " transfers its floating population to the wide, blue-tiled corridors of this flagrantly Eastern and uncomfortable caravanserai. Fresh from England one still looks for " little comforts." There are none here, and very soon one ceases to expect, and in my case to desire them. Immense rooms, immense windows, no curtains, except possibly an occasional portière, few if any carpets, doors only to bedrooms, walls that either do not reach the ceiling or open at the top, tiled floors, and the perpetual sound of clapping hands. For there is no such thing as a bell in the length or breadth of India. A servant is always " just round the corner," and if one claps one's hands, or cries " Oha Hai," he appears. Our bedrooms are

delightful, connected with each other by a private bathroom. They are large and very airy, with wide rounded windows of pale green glass overhanging the sea. The floors are of tesselated pavement; and each room possesses an electric fan, so that even at midday the heat is not excessive. Outside our doors, and connecting the rooms with the corridor, is a small recess where our servants sleep and spend the day. They are still three, and N. and P. chaff us about our " retinue."

I shall never forget our first evening in India: the magic of the island-studded bay, surely one of the most beautiful in the world!

The islands are gold now in the sunset, as they were at sunrise; and the sea is like a vast turquoise pavement, on which strange looking boats with immense sails suggest long voyages amongst Islands of Spice and Perfumes. The light deepens to orange, to crimson. The islands, square topped, as if surmounted by some fantastic creature's cauldron, seem suddenly to throw out fire. There is one awful and beautiful moment when the great Sun, that is truly a symbol of Deity in these lands, turns away as if in wrath. Then the gold pales to primrose, to lilac, to softest green. The terraces, white against the sea, and the long marble steps that lead down to the sea are stained rose. Their outlines grow blurred. Below our

windows the roadway is already dark. India's short twilight is over.

Far across the waters of Bombay there is a curious shaped island that is called by the natives " Ghari-puri," or town of the rock. Low corinda bushes and immense palms fringe the shore and rise upwards through a grove of banana and cocoanut trees to a mass of tropical vegetation.

On arrival a carrying chair with four bearers took me up the steep path to the rock caverns that lie some two hundred feet above the sea. A. preferred his feet, and jeered at me for my laziness, arriving himself on the terraced ridge over-hanging the jungle hot and very blown!

Here we were fronted by a mass of rock, cut into the shape of an elephant, the resemblance giving the island its curious English name of " Elephanta." To our eyes the likeness was not very striking, but we discovered that of late years the head and neck had dropped off and had been taken to the Victoria Gardens in Bombay, and I defy anyone to look very much like itself deprived of its head and shoulders!

A sharp turn to the right . . . and we had left the blue haze of heat and the luxuriant vegetation for the dim austerity of eighth century presentment of religion. Shiva is the all-pervading spirit of the

place. Shiva, the Destroyer and Reproducer; one of the three personal manifestations of Brahma, the great impersonal Spirit that pervades all things.

His bust, three faced and twenty feet high, stands at the far end of the great central hall. The heavy lids fall over the sensuous looking eyes. A cruel smile flickers round the full lips. Is it a play of light and shade which suggests a glint of intelligence beneath the drooping eye-lids? A stealthy movement of the horrible lips?

It is a ghastly thing to confront, to worship, and yet . . . there is something in the deep broad bust, in the colossal shoulders that inspires awe . . . almost obedience.

Instinctively one feels that here lies power; that millions have worshipped it, sacrificed to it; that in its atmosphere hovers the spirit-form of supplication, vain hope, limitless despair.

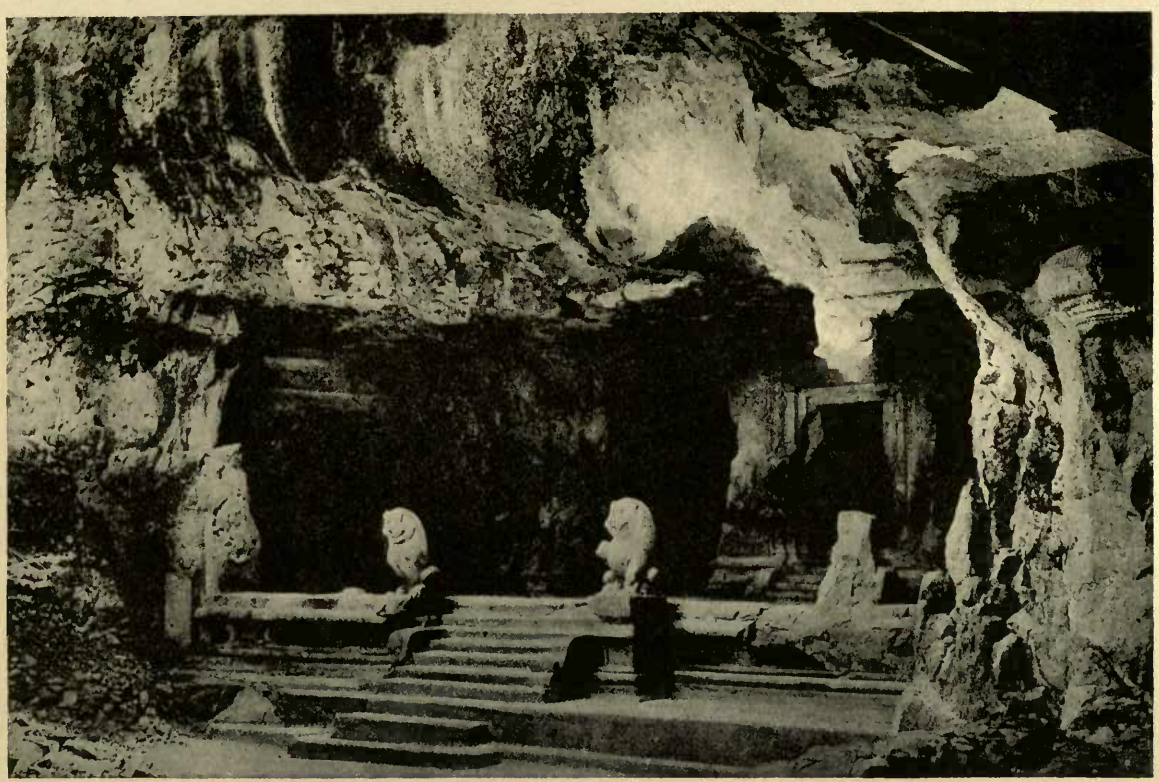
Like the nave of some gothic cathedral, this centre cave, dim and vast, opens into side courts, each one hewn out of the mountain and carved grotesquely and yet beautifully. Immense columns rise to left and right, square at the base, but as they rise fluted in deep groins, and terminated by a flat cushion-like capital. In the centre of one of the halls stands the shrine of the " Lingam," symbol of Shiva the Reproducer. It is raised above the hall by steps, and its four doors, each facing one

quarter of the globe, are guarded by stupendous figures resting on dwarfs. They are called Dwarples, the doorkeepers, and they protect the sanctity of the Lingam, a cylindrical stone three feet high, emblem of the God that both creates and destroys, that gives life and takes it again.

Beyond, down broken steps worn smooth by the passing of many feet, is a second dim hall where stands the "Arddhanarishwar," the half male, half female divinity, seventeen feet high. That half of the figure which is intended to represent the male stands on a bull, Nandi the joyous, another presentment of Shiva. Beneath the female half lies Vishnu, the Preserver. Above and around are countless lesser gods, amongst them Indra, Lord of the Firmament, mounted on an elephant.

It is interesting, possibly instructive (?), to notice that the female half of the gigantic figure is still perfect; but the male half is broken, almost obliterated!

In further corridors winding within the mountain, within chambers dim and secluded, are yet more representations of Shiva, his brow wreathed with scorpions, and round his neck chaplets of skulls. With two hands he is tearing the flesh from human bodies; with a third he holds them up derisively, an ironic smile curving his sensuous lips. How ghastly is all this misrepresentation of what should



CAVE TEMPLE ELEPHANTA

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be a beautiful religion; this furious carnage; this orgy of begetting and destroying; these figures, some of which are almost effaced by time, fading into dim surrounding walls, yet suggestive of rapine and cruelty.

Here and there the columns are stained a ghastly green, or splashed with red, horribly suggestive of corpses desperately mutilated, wounded perhaps in some unequal contest with the God of life and death. Marvellous as they are, these Cave-Temples of India, like nothing else that I have ever seen, their memory haunted me as we rowed back in the quaint bander boat across the waters to Bombay. A vaporous mist rose from the heat-sodden earth and passed across the mouth of the cave. The eastern twilight fell over the Island. Did it all really exist, or . . . had it been a feverish dream?

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It is in one of the loveliest bungalows of the Malabar Hill—that coveted, palm-covered ridge five miles above Bombay, where all Anglo-India desires to live—that we are now staying. The garden is like a vast palm-house, slumbrous with the scent of exotic flowers and plants, and sweet too as an English June with the tenderer breath of roses.

Giant climbers, purple, orange, mauve, fling themselves over the deep verandahs, almost trespassing within the cool, widely open rooms that stretch, all on one level, on either side. Every morning joy fills one afresh at waking to hot, burning sunshine, to the green gloom of tree-ferns and feathering cocoanuts, seen like a fairy mist through the blur of mosquito curtains.

To and fro moves the little Ayah, deftly arranging the clothes for the day, the only sound a tinkle of ornaments as she slowly folds or unfolds some garment. She makes no mistake, remembering every detail even to the very ornament or the most trifling ribbon that agrees, or contrasts, with the dress I am to wear. But should I make some slight change in the daily ritual, ask for grey shoes rather than white, or a pink-lined parasol instead of a tussore one, she gazes reproachfully at me as she says: "Yesterday Mem-Sahib no had this one. Mem-Sahib took other one."

The Oriental mind is so utterly conservative, so retentive of the most unimportant details of life, that any change, however slight, seems extraordinarily disconcerting. Through the open windows I can hear the patter of bare feet on the verandah. It is the "Khitmutgar" or one of his satellites preparing breakfast. Beyond move lean bronze figures wearing little save a loin cloth and a turban, their

skins shining like satin in the strong sunlight. They squat here and there on the green lawns, pruning or cutting or doing whatever is right to do at this season of the year; and if they are slow, they seem to love their work, for I am told that the Indian "Mali" is a born gardener. Sweet is the breath of jessamine, set like great stars against a tangle of flowering shrubs. Brilliant the clumps of pomegranate trees, blood-red against the pure dracaena lilies. On a small table near the window the Ayah has placed our "chotah hazri," the pale pink slices of pappoï looking specially tempting.

Bombay, is an ideal place from which to begin one's acquaintance with India. It is not so uncompromisingly Eastern as some "up-country" station would be, so that one does not feel utterly adrift in a new atmosphere. And yet from all I hear it is not so aggressively and painfully Western as Calcutta seems to be. Besides which, it is absolutely beautiful! Beautiful in colour, in luxuriance, in situation, which, I hear again, is by no means the unvarying rule among the cities of India.

It is an amusing place too; much to do socially: race-meetings; polo matches; and delightful teas and little dinners at the Yacht Club, that cool green strip of English-looking lawn that lies above the bay. Here every Friday the newly-arrived P. & O. pas-

sengers foregather, and hear the latest "up-country" scandals, and talk of "Home" so that many an exile's heart aches for the dear green meadows and the call of the birds, and the soft fresh breezes from a northern sea. Everyone meets everyone here. Rubicund Colonels whose tempers and complexions have been "touched" ever so slightly by the sun. Nice "boys" newly out from England, very knowing on the way to treat the "niggers." Commissioners, collectors, Judges . . . they are all there with their delightful Indian "bonhomie"; their easy pleasant manner concealing a multitude of interests. One's first impression is apt to be: How much nicer the average Anglo-Indian is to meet than the average Englishman! How much more interesting; how much more sociable.

And the Mems? Those heroines of a multitude of Anglo-Indian tales, written for the most part by ladies who have seldom been outside Streatham. In these exciting annals they are usually divided into two distinct groups; the pretty, fluffy-haired empty-headed butterflies, with doubtful morals and questionable taste, and the weak, fretful invalids, with pallid faces and dresses of ten decades ago. Both appear to live in an enviable state of oriental luxury lying on sofas reading novels, untroubled by domestic cares. Whereas the truth seems to me

to be that domesticity must be even more wearisome in India than it is in England, considering that three times the amount of servants must be kept, that the language, customs, and characters of these people are more or less an unknown quantity to their mistresses—yes, even after many years' residence in the country; that even the best native servants are without initiative and need the ever-present eye of the careful housewife if things are to work smoothly and well. In addition to the ills that ordinarily affect married life, there is, in India, the climate to be reckoned with. For every husband cannot afford to send his wife to the "hills," nor does every wife enjoy the separation that this arrangement necessarily entails. Yet with the thermometer at a hundred even flirtation must lose its savour, especially when the person to be flirted with owns a collar that droops moistly about his neck, and a hand that reminds one of a little schoolboy's. Then the constant "moves" with their consequent expense, usually to be done at a moment's notice! The sense that "nothing is worth while," since any scheme of life, be it only a new drawing-room carpet, may have to be abandoned ere ever it has come into being. Of course, this last drawback enters less into the lives of civilians than into the soldier's life. But with them all, behind all this gay-seeming existence looms ever the shadow of death, or of

bitter separation. For in India, no one knows what the morrow may bring forth.

India seems to be a land of vivid contrasts, almost bewildering to those who have never travelled in Eastern Asia before. At one moment, driving perhaps through the bazaars, one is living in the Arabian Nights where life has not changed since the beginning of time. Where one realizes that under her veneer of western civilization India still retains that sense of romance, that touch of half-wistful mystery which must assuredly have been the special gift the fairies brought to India. That she is still held in bonds of terror, blood sacrifice, and whispered charms. East and West jostle one another, but never quite meet. Round about the bungalows on Malabar Hill hover vultures, glutted with human flesh; their blood-shot eyes scanning the white roads that lead upwards from the city. For through the blossoming acacia and lotus trees rise the Towers of Silence, where the sacred fires of the Zoroastrians burn day and night, never to be extinguished. Yet the forty thousand Parsis who hold the wealth of Bombay in the hollow of their hands conform to European customs, and live as much like Europeans as is possible to a coloured race. They build hospitals, colleges, houses after the European manner. They finance

half the business enterprises in the East. Their women are not merely well educated, but free to go here and there about the world and mix with men, as well as women of an alien race. Often their curious black oil-cloth caps (reminiscent of old degradations, when they fled from Mohammedan persecutions in their Persian homes to the Guzerat kings in India, and were forced to wear a cow's hoof as mark of subjection), are the only outward sign of their inward differing from, shall one say, a Spaniard or Portuguese.

Yet these people, the Jews of India as they have been called, so cultured, so advanced in all things pertaining to Western civilization, offer up human flesh to be devoured by the birds of the air, and guard as carefully as the vestals of ancient Rome, the sacred fire lit, centuries ago, by the great Zarathustra.

At an hour of still noon-heat, we sat in that beautiful garden set high above the City of Bombay, and watched a little party of mourners that had but lately left their dead.

A little child, the Parsee custodian told me: and the picture that involuntarily rose before me of the soft, dimpled flesh of that little one; the big wistful eyes; the tiny clinging fingers torn to ribbons by these great loathsome birds almost made me sick. Ah, India! Strange, barbarous, terrible India;

with your mysteries, and tenderness and cruelty! Land of symbolism, that seems so inexplicable to the more matter-of-fact West. Here the elemental world is a reality, and it is because the Parsees refuse to defile the elements of earth, fire, and water with the bodies of their dead that these are delivered up to the vultures.

One's senses seem to be quickened in some extraordinary way here in India. In spite of the feeling of confusion that still lies heavy upon me with all that there is to understand and to realize, one seems to have become more sensative to impressions. Is it the vivid sunlight, quickening and unfolding one's whole being? Or is it that in this land "many ask for that teaching through which the unheard is heard, the unthought is thought, the unknown becomes known." Yes, the Upanishads are still a living force here in India, where the ideal world, the world of fable and song is accounted as true as that which we westerners call "fact," since all lies within the mind, and the whole world and life everlasting is ours if we but think it. Many an evening I have seen through the half open doorway of some temple-courtyard a little knot of figures gathered round a teacher, or perhaps a passing story-teller. And I have asked to what they were listening. "A story maybe from one of the Epics. The Rama-

yana, or the Mahabharata. Or perhaps a vedic hymn," I would be told. These are still realities to the mass of the people, interspersed with seditious newspapers and obscene stories of Krishna and the gods. More moral harm has been done to the youth of the nation through these disgusting quasi religious tales than in almost any other way; yet the priests do nothing; some encourage it even!

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Those delicious evening drives back through the cooled air from some social function; round by the horse shoe bay, circled in lights, and up through palm and bamboo groves to Malabar Hill! The glory of sunset over a sub-tropical sea is beyond words beautiful, and here are mountains steeped in the whole gamut of colour, from grey to amethyst and on to deepest gold. Sharp cries cut the air, and we looked upwards to see immense kites circling above our heads. Loathsome looking creatures, some white, some brown, but of inestimable use since they are the scavengers of India. Their cries are the first thing one hears on landing, and probably will be the last thing on leaving the country; the sound that lies beneath every other sound, and that seems to mean " India." Just as the smell of " ghee," a sort of melted butter, epitomises an Indian bazaar.

Between eleven and one all Anglo-India pays its

social calls. This morning as I was lying in a long cane chair on the verandah a smart Tum-Tum drove up, a " syce " standing up behind, and holding a sun-umbrella over the pretty Jehu. At the same instant a turbaned servant pattered noiselessly across the verandah (oh, if only our English servants went shoeless!) and held out a brass tray, into which the pretty lady dropped a card. Wise precaution, since wonderful are the transformations that English names undergo on the lips of native servants! A few seconds passed, and he returned, salaamed, and the pretty one followed him into the shadowy drawing-room. Fifteen minutes later she re-appeared, climbed into the Tum-Tum and drove away, to repeat, doubtless, the same ceremony at the neighbouring bungalow. And this with the thermometer a hundred in the shade!

" Yes, I know," my hostess said, " it does seem an insane time to pay calls, but then you see the hours between four and six are sacred to the club and polo teas, where one is sure to meet everyone, so it would be considered rude to call on people at that time. Earlier in the day, seven to ten, one is riding or hunting. Mid-day is really the only time one can pay formal calls. But we aren't very strict about calling after the first call has been paid. That little woman is a new-comer. They have to call first you know in India."

Later we were obliged to pay calls on our own account, in return for all the hospitality that we were shown during our sojourn in Bombay, and but for the different names painted in white characters on the gate of every compound our visits might have been paid to the same bungalow, so alike are they one to the other. Each is a long one-storied building with deep verandahs overhung with luxuriant creepers. About a hundred yards away are the kitchens and servants' quarters; on one side are the tennis and croquet courts—indispensible to Anglo-Indian life—in the centre is a well. The compound stretches round the bungalow, about an acre in extent, gay with flower-pots embedded in the ground (as often as not), and as green as irrigation will make it.

If the occupant is a civilian, the interior of the bungalow really looks a " home," but the constantly moving soldier usually hires his furniture from the nearest English store, and his wife must depend on pretty chintzes brought out from " home," and on the flowers that her mali will give her out of her own, or other people's gardens with which to create surroundings not too utterly depressing in their uniform ugliness.

It is marvellous what that delightful being the " Mem-Sahib " will accomplish, with the aid of the genial atmosphere of Anglo-Indian Society!

The life becomes perhaps a little stereotype. Everyone seems to live exactly the same kind of existence in the same kind of surroundings, doing much the same things at the same hour; and as everything out here is ruled by official position, the very ordering of guests at even an intimate dinner-party is not left to the initiative of the hostess, as it can be to a certain extent in liberty-loving London. Since all interests are identical in India, conversation is apt to become narrowed to two or three subjects, and as "India" means to the average men and women out here just the three or four stations they have lived in, their outlook on life is somewhat restricted.

And yet, with it all, fundamentally the average of them are such splendid people, hiding beneath "the dancer's virtue," as Nietzsche puts it, the heroism of the exile in an alien land, doing whatever their hand findeth to do not merely justly, but, imaginatively, with love. For they may grumble—at the weather, at the slackness, the slyness, the want of initiative of the native, but in their hearts they love India: those of them at any rate who do much good out here. And how much do they not do! For so little return. Pensions! someone whispers. Well, the civilians—as is only just—and their widows get the largest share, but the poor soldiers do not get much return for their years of work . . . a hundred

pounds a year to the widow of a major. Twelve pounds a year on which to bring up his child, till it reaches the age of eighteen, when it receives thirty-five pounds. And in return they have given health, youth, strength, and all the wisdom and strenuousness they are capable of. " Home " may be nearer than it used to be, but only to the rich.

CHAPTER III

BARODA

We left Bombay yesterday, and our first experience of Indian railway travelling was a revelation of comfort. To begin with, the coupè assigned to us was much larger than those on the so-called " train de la luxe " in Europe, and the berths both wider and longer.

No bedding, however, is provided by the Indian railway companies, so that everywhere it is necessary to " take up one's bed " to travel. Our " Boy " and the ayah first spread a large quilted coverlet called a " razai " over the bed, then come one's own sheets, pillows and rugs. The electric fan is turned on if the night is hot, the windows are opened and the dust-proof shutters lowered, the electric light adjusted to a pin's point, after which

one sleeps magnificently. What an immensity of trouble is saved one by the possession of a native servant! Many hours before the train is due to start, one's luggage is piled up on a bullock or camel cart and wends its way, slowly and laboriously, to the station. No one in India ever thinks of travelling " light "! The man who boasts that a comb and tooth-brush will carry him anywhere is laughed at here, where shops are not, and where everyone lives so " light " that he cannot lend any necessities to a tourist friend. The nights in most places during " the cold weather " are distinctly fresh: the days are hot. Everyone is very gay and very hospitable, therefore many are the changes of raiment necessary for a six months' tour. Chemist shops are few and far between, and disease, according to the pessimistic-minded Anglo-Indian, walks abroad, so it is as well to have a small medicine chest handy. Well too, except on the most frequented routes, to have a well-stocked " tiffin-basket " at one's side, though I am bound to say that we used ours for little more than to make tea.

All this means a stupendous amount of luggage —but what does it matter when one has a " Boy " to look after it, and when, moreover, it is expected of one, so that no fussy host is sarcastic over its proportions, and there is no such thing as a weighing machine on the station platform! The so-called

" small luggage," which includes anything that will pass through the door or window of a first-class compartment, is ranged round and about one's seat, for seldom is it that one has to share one's very large railway carriage with any one else. What is left . . . well, that goes in the van!

One arrives at the railway station a few minutes before the train is due to start, to find that one's servants have arranged the large first-class carriage to resemble, as much as possible, one's bedroom lately vacated, for marvellous is their memory for the trivial fancies of the Sahibs!

So one can drive down in comfort to the station, find one of the servants waiting for one at the entrance, be personally conducted through a tightly wedged mass of brown humanity who is shrieking, partly in excitement and partly in despair at having lost, or in fear of having lost a train. Is this calm, dignified India, one asks oneself? Train travelling is evidently popular amongst the native population, who save up for years that they may . . . . . not travel in the accepted interpretation of the word, that is to say, see fresh country, or arrive at a definite place, but that they may taste of the delirious joy of sitting behind the iron horse and passing rapidly across fields and plains.

They will make up pleasure parties and travel for

as many miles as their fancies allow them, returning when the journey is completed; and as their powers of wrestling with the local time table are on much the same level as ours with Bradshaw, they drift vaguely into the stations and sit down to wait, possibly hours, possibly a day or night, till their train comes in. Then with little frightened cries the women cluster round their lords, the children are caught up anyhow, excited, gesticulating, chattering flocks of people securely knotted one to the other run hither and thither about the platform flinging themselves headlong into the third-class carriages until these are so full that the door refuses to close and someone has to be forcibly ejected. But this upsets a whole party, for family and tribal feeling runs high in India, and one, or even two members of a family cannot be permitted to travel in another carriage, separated from the rest of the tribe. So once more begins the frantic rush up and down the platform, saris fluttering, bangles and anklets tinkling, heads of families calling despairingly to their women kind who are all the while at their heels, or clutching at their garments.

The white officials look on calmly, the Eurasian or coloured ones with a superior or exasperated smile. At last, somehow, somewhere, they are wedged into third-class carriages, where they sit, their legs tucked beneath them, looking for all the

world like rows of birds on a fence. One wonders why the railway companies should trouble to build seats in their third-class carriages, since their passengers are equally happy sitting on the floor.

And through all, and above all this clamour floats the voice of the " bheestie," or water-carrier, and the nasal insinuations of the vendor of sweetmeats, as he passes to and fro with his little tray on which are ranged cool fresh leaves, each one containing some native delicacy.

All through the night we slept soundly, and at the grey dawn our bearer knocked at the door. Baroda seemed a world of shadows, through which glimmered here and there an oil lamp or two, casting strange lights on white shrouded forms lying unconscious about the station platform. They were natives awaiting their trains, that possibly would not arrive for many hours. A crowd of nude bronze bodies were swarming up the side of the carriage, a babel of shrill voices cried to us through the windows. But with a wave of his hand the ubiquitous Sam silenced them, choosing out from amongst them a dozen promising coolies to take our baggage. Then in the half-lights we filed down the little station platform to the carriage, sent from the Residency to meet us.

It was one of the carriages belonging to the state,

and everyone knows, everyone that is who knows India, what that means. A pair of English bred horses; a shabby carriage; harness in imminent danger of giving way and four turbaned servants, two in front and two standing up at the back, gold embroidered breastplate on their long cloth tunics bearing the arms and monogram of His Highness the Gaekwar of Baroda. We drove off with a great clatter, for natives dearly like a " show," whilst behind came the bullock waggons with our luggage and the two servants. The air blew fresh and cool across the purple plains, stretching in low curves to the feet of the rising sun. The pale, almost ethereal light deepened to crimson and gold, touching into glory the white and purple blossoms of the Ak plant, and rendering even the dusty bebel tree, or the lean windswept palm a thing of beauty. Across the level empty spaces a woman wended her way, her slight figure drawn to its full height as she balanced a water pot gleaming gold in the rising sun. At the clatter of our horses she paused, drawing across her lips an edge of the " sari " that moulded her figure with its flame-coloured folds. In her isolation and mystery she seemed a symbol of India, the country of hidden things and of patient contemplation.

In something less than ten minutes we had swung through an iron gateway. The native sentry pre-

sented arms, and a moment later we drew up in front of a long white house under a pillastered portico.

A couple of turbaned servants salaamed and held back a curtain of opal-tinted beads, that tinkled softly as we passed into a large dim room. Its chairs and sofas looked mere ghostly hulks in the faint light, its rounded ceiling was lost far above our heads in the shadows. This immense room, half drawing-room, half hall, led into a square tesselated corridor, from which we passed down a couple of steps to an empty white-walled gallery, a place surely of sad strange ghosts.

Our rooms opened out of this gallery, immense as all Indian rooms seem to be. The windows were mere rounded arches, with "tattis" (cocoanut matting) stretched across them in place of glass, and wooden shutters to close them at night. The doorways were wide and almost as high as the room, with curtains drawn across them instead of doors. Beyond, lay a vista of green lawns and blazing colour. Bamboos eighty feet high: giant poinsettias a flare of vivid colour. Oleander trees heavy with scent in thickets of banana and pomegranates. Cactus and prickly pear hedged in a riot of pale pink roses, their outer petals like some exquisite shell enfolding the heart that makes the atta of roses, and that was filling the garden with an almost piercing

perfume. It was irresistible, and instead of resting, as our host had begged us to do, we disposed quickly of " chotah Hazri," and went out into the sun-splashed garden.

Baroda is a native state of eight thousand five hundred square miles; that is to say about the size of Belgium, governed by its own Maharajah (His Highness Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwar G.C.S.I.) under the supreme government. Subject to certain limitations, these native rulers are autocrats within their own dominions, and some of these dominions, Hyderabad and Mysore, for instance, are as large as some of the larger countries of Europe. They govern their states by means of ministers and Councils—Durbars—of their own choosing, and in accordance with their own ideas: and only when these ideas clash flagrantly with the ideas of their over-lord, the Indian Government, do they receive a word of caution or interference from the Resident or Political Agent in charge of their State. Should these cautionary " words " go unheeded, Government then steps in and deposes the culprit, usually raising his son in his stead. In default of an heir, the family is allowed to adopt some younger member, submit him to Government, who if it approves of the choice officially " recognises " him and sees to his upbringing. In this way the native states are

kept intact, and do not, even under mismanagement, lapse to the Crown, as happened before and just after the Mutiny.

This measure, more almost than any other, I am told, has reconciled the chiefs to British rule, for it has proved to them conclusively that their territory is safe, as it never was in the old days before the advent of the " White Raj."

Indeed, one is surprised to find, as one dips into Indian history, that India is more nearly one nation to-day under a foreign ruler than it has ever been. And also, that far from England having taken the country away from its rightful owners, the truth is that there were and are no " rightful " owners, and that only the presence of the " stronger than they " prevents each chief from fighting his neighbour, and the whole country from running in blood.

The sentimentalist who would " give back India to the Indians " either has not read history, or has not profited thereby. For the countries of India have always been ruled by a variety of alien peoples who came from beyond her borders, laid waste the land, and held as much of it as rival invaders would allow. The names of the chief of her conquerors tell one as much. Asoka: Alexander—the Kalifates of Bagdad: then the famous Mahmud of Gazni; later Timur, and Babar and his Mughals; Akbar and his three magnificent descendants: the Persian

invader Nadir Shah; and the Afghan Ahmad Shah, and now—a white race, the British. The very cradle land of the Aryans (and who in India does not count himself Aryan?) lay outside the country on the north-west tablelands of Asia: and through long ages tribe after tribe of these northern, fair-skinned people poured through the passes of Afghanistan, and across the mighty snow barriers until all India was peopled with the Aryan race. There is probably very little pure Aryan stock left in India now, the bulk of the population, the Hindus, being a blend of Aryans and Aborigines: but to this day a fair skin is accounted more desirable than a dark one, a far distant memory probably of their origin, when they called the dark faced Aboriginal tribes " Rakshasas," demons, prompting this preference.

No, the Indians can feel it no strange or degrading thing to be ruled by an alien power, and the wisest among them are glad to possess an over-lord who is strong enough to hold and keep them under a just and impartial rule. Sometimes they may complain that England, unlike their former conquerors, has never merged their interests and hers; and that the white population holds itself utterly aloof from the brown. That is true, and looking back on the result of previous amalgamations between conquerors and conquered one cannot help feeling that it would

be very unwise if a closer degree of intimacy did exist in India between the two races. Not that way can the truest form of understanding be achieved; for brotherhood, that catch-word of both the English and Indian agitator, never has meant and never will mean equality or identity.

India is not ready for even the very small amount of self-government that it already possesses, and though possibly her days are less exciting under the British Raj, they are infinitely more secure.

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Our host, having only just returned from the Delhi Durbar, found himself desperately busy, so on the first morning of our arrival a pleasant young native secretary took his place as " cicerone," and proposed to show us the Gaekwar's palace.

In a few minutes we were driving along a flat white road to " Lakshimivilas," the " Abode of the Goddess of Wealth," as the palace is called, and which lies some four miles from the Residency.

The palace is an immense collection of towers and cupolas, designed by the late Major Mant to combine, our young native secretary told us, " the styles of northern, central and southern India."

The good Major certainly succeeded in his naïve

purpose, for it is a veritable hotch-potch of architectural styles, whilst most of what we found within seemed to combine the worst taste of England and India.

Corridors of carved and gilded marble brought us to an immense Durbar Hall capable of seating at the least 5,000 people, but too closely resembling a new college or municipal hall to be impressive. So with the white marble staircase, exquisitely chiselled, but wanting in repose. The statuary is by modern French artists: the paintings for the most part by modern English artists, and I liked neither. The ornaments in the various rooms, all furnished to resemble as closely as possible a rather gaudy French hotel, seemed to have been picked up at various bazaars. The electric light fittings, and the telephone arrangements, instead of being carefully concealed as they would be in one's own house in England, are evidently matters of great pride, for their presence is almost ostentatiously advertised. Even the lift is placed in a prominent place and regarded as a thing of joy and beauty!

The bedrooms are furnished in the worst taste of Tottenham Court Road, and look as if they are never occupied, whilst the " boudoir " is such a gilded cage that surely even a Maharanee has not the temerity to sulk in it. Money has evidently

been lavished throughout the palace; how pitiable it is that money cannot buy or command taste, and that the generality of Hindu princes seem to possess so little natural taste that they are attracted inevitably by the gaudiest objects in the English market. The windows of these upper rooms are frames, stretched with " tattis," that are sprinkled with rose-water in the hot weather. We noticed a Bechstein grand piano in the Maharanee's sitting-room, and a quantity of English books and newspapers, for she both speaks and reads English fluently, and has travelled a good deal in Europe and America. Indeed, she is one of the most emancipated of Indian ladies, and outside her own country lives almost as freely as an Englishwoman. At Baroda, however, she thinks it is wise to conform to native opinion, so that she and pretty Princess Indira Raja, the only daughter, observe fairly strict " purdah." At this moment extensive preparations are being made for her marriage with the Maharajah Scindia of Gwalior, and all Baroda is en fete. We hear, however, privately that the marriage is likely to be broken off. Government does not smile on it, besides which . . . . . his brother chiefs fight a little shy of the Gaekwar at this moment. One wonders that he is not rather more careful to please the powers that be, considering the fact that his predecessor (who was not his father by the way) was

deposed and sent out of the country for being implicated in a plot to poison the Resident. Certainly insolent conduct and seditious literature is not perhaps quite so serious as to poison one's " political," still it is on the way to more serious things, and one would imagine that expediency, if not gratitude, would help the Gaekwar to remember that Government had allowed the late Maharanee to adopt him, a distant cousin, at a moment when he was running over the hills a bare-footed goat herd. For those who have but lately emerged from obscurity are easily thrust back there!

We shall never forget Christmas Day in India, with its brilliant sunshine and unusual sports, beginning with an elephant ride at half-past seven to escape the heat of the day. When we came in at a little after ten we were quite hot, and I was glad to change into the thinnest of muslins for the very substantial breakfast that at a little before eleven takes the place of lunch. A sensible plan in a hot country.

But how incongruous seemed the blinding sunshine pouring through the green " tattis," and the swaying punkas cooling the " Christmas " air! The table was laden with sugar cakes. Some were as big as " occasional " tables. Some as small as a tea plate. Some were white, some pink, some green, some red, some yellow. Surrounding them

were trays of sweetmeats and preserved fruits: and legends appropriate to the happy season were written out in flowers or tiny coloured sweets. These are offerings brought, not by the wise men of old, but by the servants and the country people to their Resident. To my chagrin I discovered that it was not the custom, indeed that it would scarcely be wise, to eat them, and after we had all duly admired them they were taken to the servants' quarters and disposed of there. But throughout the day flowers were brought to us. Rosebuds sweet as the Persian perfume from which they were made; slender trails of Jasmine (my favourite flower); sprays of plumbago, stephanotis, or poyntsetzia, strange offerings for Christmas Day, and that tried vainly to assimulate with the little bunch of home-grown holly that had come to us from across the sea, its stiff prickly leaves so unbeautiful and yet so strangely dear. And at the Christmas dinner that night I think every throat felt a little tight as the toast was given " to absent friends." For beneath India's gaiety, and the charm and interest of this wonderful land, there lies the ache in the alien's heart for all that is contained in the one word " HOME "!

Even Christmas Day could be no holiday for our poor host. Throughout the hottest hours, from twelve to four, when I lay on the sofa in the lightest

of undergarments under the rhythmic sound of the punkah, I could hear the murmur of his voice, conducting business in a distant room. And in the long verandah outside my room sat rows of natives awaiting audience, watched over by the " Chuprassies," in their gorgeous uniforms.

Hour upon hour they will wait thus, literally sitting on the soles of their feet with the long thin bodies drooping between their knees, immoveable, speechless. But every now and then the sound of a hollow cough would come to me, for half the people in this land of the sun are consumptive. Is it to be wondered at with nights almost as cold as any of our late autumnal ones, in which most of them sleep in the open air with little save a blanket to cover them? How often coming home at night in Bombay, when the temperature had dropped almost half, I saw thin figures cowering over their little fires and coughing so terribly . . . . . so pitifully.

* * * * * *

This morning we visited the " Dufferin Hospital," which of course interested us enormously. It is a long low white building, standing within a garden of sweet smelling flowers and palm groves, and separated from the bungalow where the English matron and two sisters live by a wide and shady courtyard. One of these most kindly took me all

over the building, introducing me to some of the patients, and telling me a little about them.

" It is one of the most valuable pieces of work ever done for India," she said, as we passed through the high cool corridors. " Lady Dufferin was indeed a ministering angel. Seventeen years ago nothing was done for women. The men had splendidly-equipped hospitals, and an efficient Indian Medical Service. But nothing was done for the wives and mothers on whom the whole vitality of the nation depends. They were left to the native ' Dhaïs,' who as a rule is a desperately ignorant individual. Of course, some of them are very wise concerning the curative powers of certain herbs and the hidden forces of nature, but the generality of them are as ignorant as their patients. Do you know, one day I was walking through an Indian village and I heard through the half-open door of a hut, agonised moans, cut short every now and then by piercing cries. I ran towards the hut and found a girl lying beyond the hut in a sort of outhouse on a mass of damp and filthy rags. She was quite young, a mere child, but beside her lay the scarcely living form of an infant. I asked her if anyone was looking after her, and she said that the Dhaïs had been with her when the baby was born, but that she had gone now ' because I am dying.' Five precious hours had

been wasted during which this poor child's life blood was ebbing away for want of a little skill. I did what I could for her, but it was too late. I could make her comfortable, could ease her agony a little, that was all. At that time I was new to the country, and I suggested moving her into the hut, which at any rate was dry, and possessed a charpoy (a native bed). 'Ah no, you must not,' she gasped, 'I am unclean.' And so she died on the sharp rough stones in that evil-smelling stable, unclean because she was a mother. Perhaps you think that this was an unusual case. It is not. Even to-day, with the Dufferin hospitals scattered all over India, as well as the various mission hospitals, the mortality amongst the women and children of India is far higher than it should be. The invested resources of the 'Countess of Dufferin Fund Association,' as it is called, is at this moment thirty-two lakhs of rupees, with which it maintains five hundred hospital assistants and a hundred and forty lady doctors. The latest official report states that two million two hundred and fifty thousand women and children had been treated in the year, but one has to remember that India is a continent, not a country. Even now women often have no choice between employing the useless and ignorant Dhaïs, or thrusting their hands through a hole in the purdah in order that one of the I.M.S. doctors should prescribe for them. You

see, a strict purdah woman (and every high caste woman in India is purdah) cannot be treated by a medical man. I wish they would send us a woman doctor, then we should be able to take in far more cases. As it is, none but the low caste women will come to the hospital. Or if the others come, it is when they are dying, too late for us to do them any good. That little woman that you see in the bed over in that corner came in two days ago. She got double pneumonia, and I wanted her to come to us at once, but nothing would persuade her to."

" But why," I asked, " she is screened off from every one. Even if she didn't like men doctors attending her, she would surely let you look after her? "

" Yes, but the very fact that a man puts his foot inside the hospital makes it an unfit place for a strict purdah woman. So only when she was dying and the Dhaïs and her relatives were frightened did they bring her here. But of course its too late."

" How dreadful," I said. " But can't you get any women doctors? "

" It is difficult. There are not many in the country, for the pay is not sufficient to induce highly-qualified lady doctors to leave England and settle in India. If only Government would take up the matter and give them official recognition, which means a fixed and suitable pay, and a pension, the

needless suffering and mortality imposed at present on the women and children of India might be arrested. It is not only one class of women that suffers through this general ignorance on medical and sanitary matters, but practically all. The rich Hindu as much or more than her poorer sisters. She is just left to get well or to die, whichever happens to be her fate. If her husband is unusually rich, and happens to be very fond of her, a solution of crushed diamonds or rubies may be given her at the instance of the native doctor, that is to say the jewels are sent him, and he prepares . . . . . a solution which he *says* was made from the jewels. Probably she dies, but her husband has done what he could. Skilled treatment would have saved her life, but where could he have found it? Even those native states that possess a lady doctor are very little better off. For with the best will in the world she can only attend a mere fraction of the people. No, the drain upon the life force of India will never be stopped until there is a sister branch to the present I.M.S. It has taught the people belief in western science, and I am quite certain they would welcome with joy women doctors working on western lines. They have for the most part the most childlike faith in the white man or woman, and will take with implicit faith any concoction that the Sahib chooses to give them."

" What sort of cases do you mostly get in the women's hospitals? " I asked.

" A good deal of pneumonia, but even more internal cases; miscarriages and of course confinements. I know it is a popular belief that Eastern women suffer less in their confinements than women do in the West, as many of them are practically and to all intents and purposes savages. This is quite a mistake. The death-rate amongst savages is terrific, and their agony, unrelieved as it is by any skilled help, is fully as great as any western woman would suffer under the same circumstances. Naturally, the higher the organism the more susceptible do the nerves become, but the danger to life is just as great. Of course, in the case of Hindus with their child marriages the danger is increased. Half of the women of India are physically ruined through this practice of early marriage.

A child-mother runs terrible risks. Even if she survives her first confinement she will more than likely die from the second or third, and nearly every woman in India suffers from internal troubles that are the result of too early or too frequent child-bearing. No animal can reproduce or give birth to young before it reaches maturity, but Nature unfortunately leaves many things to the supposed common-sense of human beings, half of whom do not possess common-sense. The fact that a woman *can*

give birth to a child is not any proof that she can do so with impunity. The Government statistics for this year show that the greater proportion of children born of very young mothers either died in infancy or were still-born. And very often those who live are sickly or under-developed. The custom is dangerous both to the mothers and the children."

" But why is it allowed to go on? " I asked.

" It is an old custom, and therefore difficult to break. Possibly, too, the greater proportion of parents don't realise the danger their daughters are running. It has grown to be natural and inevitable in this country for the women to be semi-invalids."

Poor patient women of India! My heart ached as I glanced round the wards, half of them filled with needless sufferers. How fresh and sweet the rooms looked. So large and airy, so unlike eastern rooms in their order and cleanliness. But how it must fidget the patients, most of them, to be so surrounded with western life! For though many of the men come into close contact with the " Sahib Log," as they call them, their private lives remain as they always were, untouched by western thought or action. And the women, with the exception of the handful of emancipated high-caste ladies, know nothing of western life. In the palace here we had seen wonderful suites of rooms furnished

with every modern gaudy accessory from Europe; and in every palace in India it is the same I believe. But in most of them, somewhere, in some remote corner a little removed from these gilded apartments are small dark rooms in which stands a charpoy (an Indian string bed). And here the great Maharajah who an hour before may have been dispensing tea in the most approved English fashion to his European guests, will be discovered squatting on the floor with his hookah, divested of most of his garments. Truly the west has but touched the outermost shell of Eastern life.

But the sudden eastern night was descending upon us. Already the horizon seemed a vast violet curtain enclosing us in silence. The air grew suddenly fresh, and on the roof tops figures could be seen outlined against the sky. One felt the quick glance of invisible women, who, under the protection of the darkness were walking to and fro on the flat roofs. At the threshold of each house a " butty " had been placed, little flickering wicks, lighted and floating in a sea of oil within an earthenware saucer. And in their light one saw little knots of women grinding corn, two women at each grindstone just as the Bible describes them. For in customs all the East is one large family, whose ways change not. Two round stones, the lowest of which

is fixed to the ground, make this primitive hand mill; and the grain is poured through a hole in the middle, the women working the upper stone which is on a pivot by means of a handle. The sound of tom-toms and the sudden clash of cymbals came from within some darkened house; for at sunset " poojah " is made to the gods. The bazaars were crowded with a never ending kaleidoscope of coloured figures, through which wandered the sacred bulls, often completely blocking the narrow street, but with whom no one will venture to interfere. Yet from what I hear and from what I have seen, the Hindus seem quite indifferent to the lives they will not kill. The great patient oxen that draw the heavy carts with six, sometimes eight wheels, are often in a horribly emaciated condition, yet they are forced to work with their bones almost breaking through their skins, and if they refuse to, their tails are twisted till they break. Sometimes I am told the wretched beasts fall down in sheer exhaustion, and then, if neither blows nor the touch of steel on some raw spot will force them to get up, a fire is lighted under and round them, and they either rise to stagger through more work, or are left to die at their leisure. For they are sacred. They may not be killed . . . . . though they can be tortured.

Of course for a westerner to complain of eastern cruelty is for the pot to call the kettle

black, inasmuch as the most fiendish methods of cruelty have been devised in Europe, especially in southern Europe. And England does not lag far behind. But then all the Latin races believe that animals have no souls, and consequently cannot suffer; whilst in northern Europe the prevalent idea is that the nerves of animals are very much less sensitive to pain than are human nerves. But in India animals have not merely been endowed with souls, but are actually worshipped as gods. Consistency must surely be an attribute of the Superman, since neither in East nor West does the mere human seem to achieve it.

At first when I had seen these strange humped cattle I had thought they were buffalos, for one day our host had given us the well-known Indian dish "buffalo hump," which is like very delicious boiled silverside. But I learnt that it is just the buffalos who have no hump, whilst all the Indian bullocks have a large hump between the shoulders, below which is placed the wooden yokes that form their only harness.

These humps are supposed to be designed by Nature against famine, and the Indian oxen can go a prodigious time on little or no food, the humps shrinking to less than half their size before the bodies of the animals are affected.

We wandered on through the bazaars with their curious scent of ghee, charred cedar wood, and jasmine, which is cut off short and strung together into garlands and hung across every shop.

The grain sellers were doing a thriving trade, and minute " pice " clinked one against the other, and fore-fingers wagged to and fro, that most insistent gesture seen nowhere but in India. A little further on we came to the " pansari " with his medley of medicines, hidden away in earthenware pots and mysterious little phials and screws of paper. Opium and bhang and arsenic, sold under Government license, are all here, as well as strange eastern perfumes and Epsom salts, Eno's, and Seidlitz powders.

I heard that mysterious remedies, talismans of crushed jewels and coloured powders, or a few mystic words written on betel leaves are sold occasionally in the dim recesses of the drug shops. For the Occult still holds sway in India.

Shadows vanished within a door in the wall . . . . living shadows that muttered as they passed and hastily drew together the white saris that proclaim them that most helpless thing on God's earth . . . . a Hindu widow. They paused a second before a niche in the wall, above which flickered the tiny votive lamp. And below was a lingam stone, smeared with red, the imprint of blood, yet sacred

in their eyes. Another second and they were gone, and the narrow door in the high windowless wall closed on them with a dull thud. Whither, and into what conditions have they vanished? The secret of womanhood is surely the secret of India.

CHAPTER IV

IN RAJPUTANA

We left Baroda for Udipur at seven o'clock in the morning, and as usual we had the railway carriage to ourselves.

The heat, though not unpleasantly great, was sufficient to make one drowsy.

However, with electric fans, violet glass windows, and dust-proof shutters, plenty of iced drinks, our own china tea, books and papers, besides a well-stocked tiffin basket from the Residency, the day passed pleasantly enough. Whenever I looked up it was to see broad sandy plains, with low hills cutting the horizon, or a solitary group of palm-trees and here and there a water wheel and slender figures grouped around in brightly-coloured saris.

Once we passed upwards through a bleak stone country, where the trees were bare against the sky, as they would be at this moment in distant England. Only there the trees stand like wraiths in grey mist, against a sky burning redly with the first hint of departure. Here they are black against a sky cruelly blue.

Later we passed through deep nullahs, parched and broken into tortured looking fissures for want of rain. Beyond, to the very horizon, were sandy empty flats seamed with water courses, void of all life save perhaps a string of camels, making their devious ways heavily laden; or a little goat-herd piping his flock to some distant pasture-land.

The sun burnt fiercely on scorched fields and bare rock hills; on hedges of wild aloes with their blood-red flowers flaring insolently against the molten sky; on wayside stations blistering in the glare of desert solitudes.

How came they here, these stations? Who in all this wilderness of parched lands uses them?

About half-past four we reached Rutlam, the junction at which we had to change and wait for a couple of hours.

It is an immense station set down—apparently—on the empty plains. From the high wooden railway bridge we could see a huddle of native huts, a

few railway bungalows, then . . . red baked desolation.

" Come for a walk," suggested A. But it seemed futile. One could never compass such spaces. Hours of walking would bring one to no fresh point. And I wandered back to the station to watch the strange crowds that gather there, whilst A. continued his walk.

An hour later he returned to tell me that I had missed a delightful tea at the English Club.

" But how did you find the Club, or get into it? " I asked.

" Oh, I came upon it quite suddenly, ten minutes after you left me, and I stood at the gate for a few minutes watching the people play tennis. Presently a kitmungar came up and said the ladies begged me to come in and have some tea, so I went in like a shot."

" I should think so," I said, somewhat enviously. " But did the ladies fancy they knew you? Had they mistaken you for some one else? "

" Oh, no. They just saw me standing there, and thought I might like some tea. A sort of gymkana was going on, and every one seemed very happy. People introduced themselves, and I gave somebody my card, and . . . . Well, I must say people in India are extraordinarily hospitable."

We left Rutlam after an excellent dinner at the Railway Station, and arrived at Chitor-Garh just before dawn. The moon had almost burnt herself out, and as we groped our way along the ill-lit platform the stars seemed to recede in a blue black sky, leaving Venus alone, a watchful eye in the dusk. The air was sharply cold, and there was a faint soughing of wind through the palm trees.

The guard flashed a lantern on to the windows of the first-class carriage that was to take us on to Udipur, and suddenly a bulky Englishman clad in pyjamas rolled out from a bundle of rugs. I represented to the native guard that we really could not all travel on together hugger-mugger, and he instantly promised to extract from his store-house a carriage for our use. But nothing is of less importance in Rajputana, most ancient of all native states, than the arrival or departure of trains. For it is only some fifteen years that any railway has existed, since what do Rajputs, the twice-born, want with constant excursions into other and inferior lands! So we waited in the velvet dusk till the big white railway carriage had been slid into place, and we watched the pure almost cruel light of dawn sharpen every outline, and tear the veil from off all things. For that which gives the subtle joy and tenderness to northern twilight is unknown in the east. However much one may feel the power and

majesty of the sun in these sub-tropical lands, one is also conscious of . . . can I call it a vulgarity, or want of restraint . . . in these lands where nothing is hidden?

We drew down the blinds and tried to sleep, but soon even this protection was unavailing against the piercing rays of the yellow light. Sleep was impossible, so we opened the windows and were rewarded by a rush of clear cold air and hot sunshine. A strange country lay round us. Low conical-shaped hills rose on either side, over which circled great vultures. Sometimes the hills receded, disclosing yellow plains with date palms dotted here and there in isolated clusters, a caravan sheltering beneath them. Presently the hills pressed closer. They seemed to engulf the little train, creeping through them like some diminutive animal. We were in a narrow gully, cut in the circle of hills. A second later . . . and the train emerged on to fields green and luxuriant as those of Elysium. A delectable land, flowing with milk and honey.

Truly here must be hidden magic, in these groves of citron and almond, beneath these banyan trees with their wide-spreading branches obscuring all but the shadow world. Brilliant hued flowers entwined themselves about the stems of mango and palm trees. Temples gleamed white through the green gloom. It might have been the garden of the

sleeping palace shut in here far away from the world.

We found tongas awaiting us at the station, and drove three miles to the little bungalow hotel. Drove, do I say? Jolted, bumped, heaved our way through dust and over stones at the imminent risk of falling by the wayside.

But . . . at the end . . . when we stood on the terrace of the little Däk bungalow . . . well, IT WAS WORTH IT! Worth the long railway journey, the change of trains in the cold dawn, the hot perilous drive.

"It is the fairy palace of my dreams," I said, as I gazed across the plain through a haze of golden dust to the pale ethereal city of Udipur set on a hill.

"Or the cardboard palace at Earls Court?" laughed A.

One of the state carriages had been sent for our use, and about four o'clock, after a long siesta, we set out to explore the city of Udipur.

Udipur is the capital of the state of Mewar, which, together with those of Jodphur, Jaipur, and Bundi, are the four original states of Rajputana. The rest are either derived from them, or else had their origin long after these were founded. As we drove through the gateway into the city a curtain seemed lifted from the past. Bastion walls, loop-holed and

girt about with a moat, defended by five immense gates fitted with jagged spikes that were bright and horribly suggestive of present use, barred our way. Within, nothing seemed to date later than the eighteenth century.

No newspapers penetrate here, and the post comes only once a day. Every man goes armed, slender rapiers bend and spring back and never break: long pointed swords with antique handles flash in the sunlight. The gates are shut at sundown, after which none dare pass. One of them is dedicated to the Sun, another to the Moon, a third is sacred to the royal beast the elephant. The streets are desperately narrow and alive with colour. A flash of orange; the gleam of a crimson cloak fluttering in the breeze; a glare of purples, green, rose. Our carriage was forced to go at a footspace through the teeming shifting crowds that pressed closely and surrounded us like a river of brilliant tints.

"Ohé . . . . Ohé" . . . cried our servants. And the footmen standing at the back jumped down and ran amongst the crowd scattering it right and left.

On either side lay hutches for all the world like wooden boxes set upright, and filled with piled-up masses of coloured grains, flour, currie-fruits, rice, "soojee," the germ of the wheat; or else a delicious confusion of fruits and vegetables, gourds of strange

shapes and hue, coloured melons, little crimson bananas and pappoï cut open to display their delicate apricot interiors. At the corner stands the goldsmith's shop, a few squares of mud backed like the rest in wood, in the centre of which is a tiny mud-brazier. The owner sits cross-legged, busy with his blow pipe, beside him a minute pair of scales on which he will weigh the gold and silver ornaments that are brought him by the country-women.

These are their little store of wealth. A good year and the husbands will buy an extra bangle or nose-ring. A bad year and they are brought to the goldsmith to be pawned or sold. Marvellous are the weights with which he gauges their value. A few grains, a bit of coloured glass, an oddly shaped lump of turquoise. He changes money too, giving you two handfuls of strangely shaped coins, the currency of the country, for your rupee. For Udipur still refuses to adopt the Indian Government's currency, as have some of the more advanced native states. Udipur, I am thankful to say, is incurably mediæval. No new-fangled Western notions for its magnificent old Maharajah, the descendant of the Sun God and head of the famous Sesodia dynasty. In this country myths seem more real and possible than so-called fact that has been tampered with by more than one historian. His Highness the Maharajah Sir Fateh Singh Bahadur G.C.S.I.,

can trace his ancestry back—authentically—two thousand years, and many strange customs survive here in this little backwater of Rajputana that in other parts of India have long since gone the way of all charming and possibly over-exciting picturesque effects. Here the Maharajah is absolutely loyal and honest, an aristocrat and a man of honour. And I should not wonder whether, after all, this type of the more old-fashioned ruler is not less of a " handful " to the Indian Government than the aggressively modern and progressive younger man.

Rumour has it that " Sutti " is not altogether unknown in the State of Mewar, and that blood-feuds are carried on from one generation to another in terms even such as in Sicily. The old world " magic " that is now coming rapidly to be accounted " science " plays a strangely vivid part here. Yet the fact remains that Viceroys and Governors have come to Udipur armed with the latest reform, and have departed again leaving this garden of the Sleeping Beauty as they found it. For a few such spots are left now in our machine-made utilitarian world, and perhaps even a Viceroy's sense of duty is not so uncomprehending that it bids him destroy it utterly.

Through crowded bazaars we went our way, the clamour of voices, the beating of prayer gongs, surrounding us. Thakors, mounted on fine Rajput

horses, passed us at a gallop, their cloaks of indigo green or saffron flying over their shoulders as they vanished in a cloud of golden dust. Or a head-man from some neighbouring village with his rapier curved beneath his arm and his quilted Rajput coat of many colours half-obscuring his horse. The cry of the water carrier rose shrill in the air, as he passed with his black goat skin inflated to monstrous proportions. A sea of coloured turbans drifted through the narrow gateway that leads to the outer courts of the Maharajah's palace. A veritable story-book palace, with blank white walls a hundred feet high flanked by octagonal towers and crowned by cupolas. Here surely must live the wicked uncle of fairy tales: the beautiful princess: the knights and ladies: the little hunchback that turns into a prince: the cruel step-sister who is forced to assume some humiliating form at night: the merchants from far countries: the sorcerers, soothsayers, perhaps even, who knows, the magic carpet. Lattice windows high, very high, in the blank wall recall the legend of Rapunzel's hair. Narrow pointed archways, doors heavily barred, white steps leading to balconies and terraced gardens complete the illusion. All is so silent. No face looks out of the window; no door is opened or closed. The sun beats fiercely on white walls and terraces. A silence heavy as sleep or trance lies over the vast palace and golden

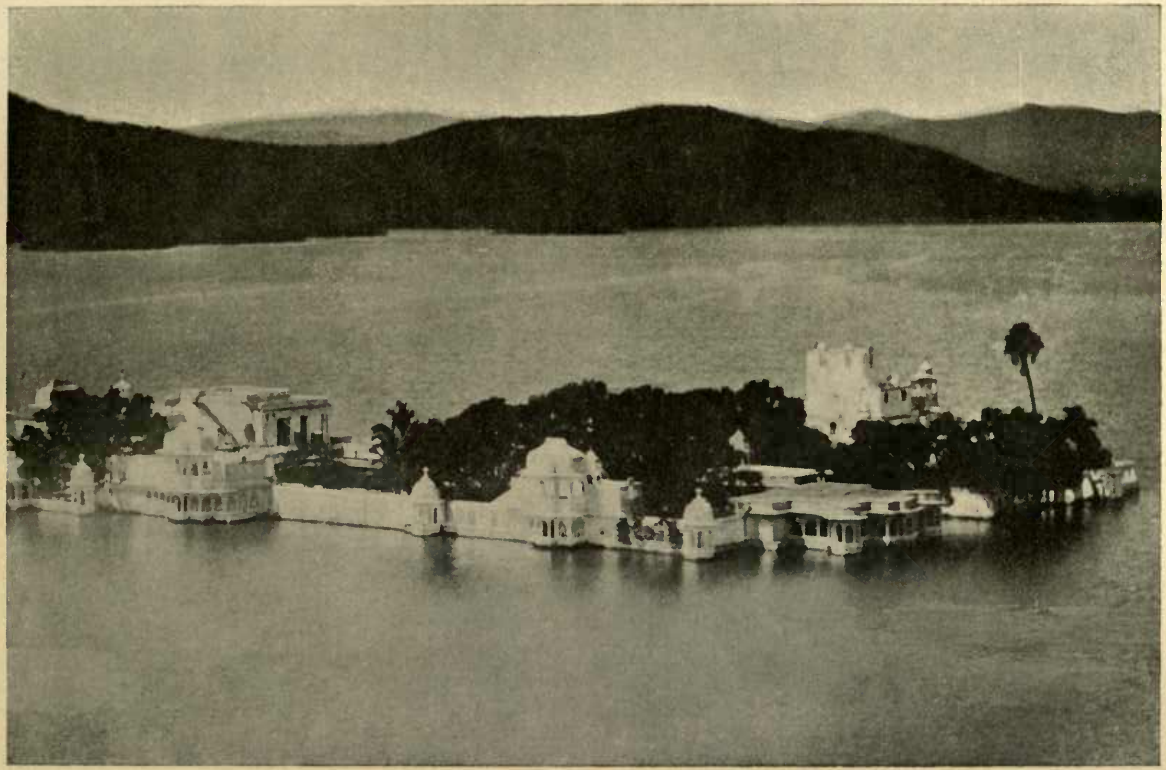
towers. Over its marble steps wash little waves from the lake, blue as iris. A thing of magic, so still, so clear that every pinnacle, every hanging terrace is reflected beneath, a second and yet more exquisite city. Beyond lie two islands, floating palaces whose ivory walls and hanging gardens seem like lotus buds drifting on a tideless sea. A circle of hills, soft violet in the shadows, a haze of gold in the sun, hem in the lake and city, and between the water and the islands lie forests dark and as mysterious as any in fairy-land.

We rowed across to a flight of long stone stairs, and ascended to find ourselves in a secret garden hidden from the world by high walls inlet with silver and gold, with jacinth and lapiz-lazuli, with the tenderness of mother-of-pearl and the passion of the ruby. Jewelled flowers and leaves were fantastically suggested against a back-ground of alabaster. The subdued trickle of water, running through marble rills, the faint splash of fountains, the crooning of doves alone broke the silence. Great clumps of blood red roses grew in the little garden, hidden away so carefully behind its high walls, guarded so jealously by deep waters. Red petals lay scattered on the white marble pavement. Nowhere was there any hint, in this cool and silent court, of the pain or torment of life, of its desolation or bitterness. The call of the doves suggested

love songs; the perfume of the red rose and of the pale white stephanotis symbolized the pains and delights of love. Slender balconies of pierced alabaster fine as gossamer overhung the court; stairways within the thickness of jewelled walls led to dim chambers whose coloured windows stain the inlaid floors. It is all a little unfamiliar, a little exotic, and yet . . . it is all so incontestably a pean raised to beauty, a thing of no particular use, and of little worth as the world counts worth. A thing set apart for the enjoyment of a few hours or a few days snatched from life.

The sun was setting as we rowed back across the lake to where our carriage awaited us. The walls and terraces of the palace were stained rose. The islands seemed to float on a sea of glass, like fairy clouds just tipped with pink. The sharp outlines of hills and forests were flushed wine-red and opaline. Every cupola and temple pinnacle was sharpened into high relief, rising before us like some magical and all too beautiful vision . . . to fade or float from sight.

The little däk-bungalow seemed very solitary that night, on its heights above the city. Across the wilderness of rank grass came the low howling of



THE WATER PALACE, UDIPUR

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pariah dogs, and an occasional laugh of a jackall. The moon, almost at her full, threw mysterious shadows across the pale desolation. The hills, stark and white stood ghoolishly against the sky. They seemed peopled with strange sounds, the audible presence of night—and with silences yet more significant. To the north some camel drivers had lighted camp fires, and in the glow I could see hooded figures pacing to and fro, muskets in their hands. The air came cold across the level plains; the lights in the city shone redly, like the eyes of a many-eyed monster crouching beyond the bastion walls.

Something . . . that was not of men nor things tangible was astir. . . . The outer world had suddenly grown very still . . . the verandah was full of faint grey shadows . . . a light—came—and then—went!

The Palace Udipur

We drove through a deep archway defended by a couple of speared gates, and at a hard gallop rushed up the inclined terrace that leads to the palace. An enclosed corridor built in the thickness of the wall brought me to a second gate that was unbarred with much ostentation, and disclosed an

immense outer court. Yet more walled corridors, and I was within a second courtyard, larger than the first, and built about with raised terraces and little inner-rooms in which sat a number of people cross-kneed, writing in folios, or reading from manuscripts. To the right lay a flight of steps, at the head of which sat a gaudy red and gold travesty of the god Gânesh. Its red-daubed body was hung with jewels. Its face was of the usual leering sensual type that seems to represent most of the divinities of this land. Another flight of stone stairs, and we were in a labyrinth of corridors, of dim painted chambers, of open colonnades and sunken gardens, where peacocks trailed their brilliant plumage over inlaid floors, and doves cooed through the warm golden hours. Little stairways winding upward to roof-gardens, or down to marble bathing tanks, were let into the walls. Secret doors hidden behind mirrors, or opening at a touch on some scarcely perceptible flower on wall or pavement, whispered of intrigue and plot.

Beyond lay a square roof garden, sunk beneath white walls patterned in colours of such exquisite delicacy as to suggest curtains of trailing silk. The jewelled floor lay shadowy beneath overhanging mango trees. A low screen in wrought marble surrounded a tangle of flowers, in the centre of

which lay a marble pool half hidden by trailing ferns.

On three sides rose enclosed terraces, pierced here and there by ivory lattices; and within lay a dim hall rose-red in the glow of jewelled windows. Here and there were ivory doors. They open, and marble stairways wind steeply up to dim chambers glowing with inlaid gold and silver. Still higher, and we are on an open roof with slender pillared balconies overhanging the whole city. Dainty screens of pale ivory enclose them, as fragile as lace work; so fragile indeed that it was positive pain to see a rent in the beautiful work. I longed to repair it; carefully, reverently, with some slender jewelled needle as beautiful as the work.

One morning I drove to the city jail, which I discovered, somewhat to my surprise—for were we not in mediæval Rajputana—the very antithesis of the infamous jail of Tangiers. Round a large sunny courtyard are open colonnades, in which the prisoners sleep at night, and sit cross-legged through the day, pursuing their various handicrafts. Their legs are fettered one to the other, and as they move about their work a clanking of chains strikes a note of old world barbarism that agrees little with their general treatment.

They appeared supremely content, for monotony, that drives many an European prisoner to madness, is little hardship to natives of India, and they are kindly treated and well fed. Possibly they are asked to do rather more work than they altogether care about, but the work is not arduous, and it is work to which they were born, and their fathers before them. For, at any rate, caste, that is responsible for so much of India's disabilities, has at least helped to preserve inheritance of thought, and skill in handicrafts. The Hindu's trade is literally bred in him. The designs of the carpets I saw in the jail, even in many cases the very colouring has been handed down from father to son.

In the pottery I recognised the simple antique designs that made beautiful the jars carried by the women of Greece. For Greece too has passed this way and left her mark, so that thousands to-day who are ignorant of her name toil patiently at reproducing designs she made a thousand years ago.

Before even his birth into the world, the son of the potter is fore-ordained to the making of pots, and the son of the weaver to the loom, and this gives him a natural dexterity that no amount of teaching can distance. Gives him patience too, and a contentment with his lot unknown in the West, where few even pretend to be satisfied with " that state of life to which the Lord their God hath called them."

Yet these words form part of the Christian creed, though it is Hindus who practice it. But then they believe in the law of Karma, and have been trained to respect caste from one generation to another. Of course, it has its attendant evils. The caste system tends to rob men of initiative and creative power. It separates them so utterly one from the other that combination and national efficiency is almost irretrievably lost.

In the beginning caste undoubtedly meant self-preservation; for it is race-continuity; it is the historic sense; the realisation of the value and dignity of tradition; of the past and future of family and race.

It was absolutely necessary to civilization, and is still in a modified degree. India may be " caste-ridden," but England in these democratic days would surely be the better for a little of the same ridding. That the sense of individuality which was the special gift to the fifth sub-race has done good work and should go its way is proved, I think, by the confusion that is overpowering the western nations to-day. Men are not and cannot be for many aeons of time equal, and if natural divisions are broken up chaos must ensue.

In the old days in India every boy was apprenticed to his father, or to the best craftsman in his father's profession, and in due time he became a member of

his Caste Guild. He could not leave it or exchange his work for some other, but if he were ambitious he could concentrate his energies on becoming a skilled workman, an artist in his own line, worthy to hand on the secret lore of his trade. Under the modern system of technical education young men of all castes are taken who can leave at will, and the result has been that as a general rule only the inefficient or the idle have applied for Industrial and Scientific Education.

An industrial transformation has undoubtedly set in throughout India, the inevitable result of her alliance with a materialistically prosperous nation. Under the new rule weaving mills have sprung up all over the country, and gradually are taking the place of the old hand looms. A pound of cloth can be woven more cheaply in the mills than by hand. And yet, need that be so? In India life is very cheap, for the workman not merely does not get, but does not need one quarter the wage that the British workman expects, and strikes for. Besides which, he can combine weaving with his ordinary agricultural work, turning it over to his children and women-kind when he is otherwise occupied, and the capital necessary for setting up hand-looms is small. Of course, in these days it is absurd, I suppose, to say, " Is money everything? " Every nation conceives it

her duty to maintain, and if possible distance, the average of worldly prosperity, because money is the chief means of obtaining education and the refinements of life. In short, it is one of the most important levers in evolution. Broadly speaking, only very highly evolved egos are independent of circumstances and environment, and therefore it is the duty of every country to see that its people are not placed at a disadvantage with the peoples of other countries.

Experts maintain that the establishment of weaving mills in India is the only way of successfully meeting European competition. But if this is so, would it not be better to expend the money necessary to raising and starting the mills in improving the hand-looms? They have several advantages over their rivals. For one thing their workers possess hereditary dexterity; also the stuffs woven by hand are far more durable, as any house-wife can testify, and—chiefest of all reasons—they are infinitely more beautiful and worth having than what the machines have as yet brought forth. Indian muslin, to name only one thing, is the most exquisite and all enduring thing, when hand made. Besides, money does not adequately represent prosperity. What of the broken or starving homes that factories have created in the West? The thousands of women who have lost their home industries, and so

have been driven into the open market to slave for a pittance, the pittance that they earned once so easily within the shelter of their own homesteads.

Once England had her weavers, her embroiderers and lace-makers, her bakers and brewers. A number of them were women. To-day one machine can do what hundreds of these people did, and were paid for! A few people only are needed to look after the machine, these few in many cases being women, the very descendants perhaps of the women who in the old days stayed in their homes and did the self-same work. It is strange that men feel so bitterly this question of woman's work and woman's place in the community, knowing as they must in their hearts that it is they, rightly or wrongly, who have created the difficulty. That it is they who have torn away the natural shelter that once surrounded women by depriving them of the work that they could do, and were paid to do in their homes, and by taking from their husbands and fathers the old arts and crafts, so that now ten men will do the work which formerly needed a hundred.

And these men are mostly little better than machines to feed and direct machines, so the bulk of the population is not better off even so far as money goes, and is a thousand times worse off in all that makes for character and intelli-

gence. Worse off probably in health, since under the best circumstances work done under factory conditions cannot be so healthful as that done in their own, even insanitary, homes, where at least they are not massed together so that both moral and physical health is endangered.

Even those who believe that money is everything must realise that the cost of an article does not determine the wealth or poverty of those who buy it, and that even if machine-made articles are cheaper to produce, they yet may not prove cheap to the nation who buys and sells them with their blood and tears.

And India? Must India allow that which has proved such a questionable blessing to Europe to invade her country? Must she throw aside her handicrafts in order to rival the Manchester and Birmingham markets? Create and make less in order that she may spend less? Must she forsake her Irani carpets, her dyes caught from the very flowers, her beautiful hand-woven fabrics for those terrible " Manchester goods " that, with the irony of fate, she takes such pride in!

Is it conceivable that any nation that has transposed the colours of the lily and the pomegranate, the curves of palm or banyan on to cloths, can forsake them for aniline dyes and the hideous shapes of our ordinary household utensils? One is driven

to believe that after all no nation, as a nation, is really artistic, and that England to-day would be as beautiful in her daily life as any eastern nation, if she too were still in subjection to a handful of guiding spirits from the past.

But aniline dyes are cheap, and those who wish to, forget that they are not cheaper in the end, since they fade quickly and wear badly. Perhaps, too, they forget that hundreds of thousands of workers have been thrown out of employment, and that the weavers of Bengal, whose fame once penetrated to Europe, are starving for want of work? That in past ages, before the West came to the East, she was famous for many industries that now are decaying or dead? It has been done in the name of progress, but is it all progress? Is it not possible that the materialism of the West may destroy the spiritual heritage of India? For I suppose few will deny that ages of unbroken thought has endowed the Eastern nations with a deeper knowledge of the power of the Spirit than is universal in the West. Egypt as a country, and in the monuments that are extant, is older than present-day India, but her people are scattered, and those to-day whom we call " Egyptians " have inherited neither the thought nor the civilization, nor even the traditions of the earlier race.

But in India to-day are the descendants of our

own great Root-race, the Aryan, and the wise men of earlier days have handed on the torch of knowledge so that Indian philosophy is indeed wise and very ancient. Age is not, of course, in itself of special worth. Sometimes it stands for decay; a flagging of the life force, and ideas and ideals that are stagnant are as unhealthful as stagnant water. But on the mental as well as on the physical and spiritual planes habit counts for much, and needs time to develop. The eternal verities will be the more readily understood for the long connected thought that lies behind them.

The figures of the gods set up for worship; the Lingam, emblem of procreation, with all its disgusting and bestial rites, scarcely dispose one to belief in the spirituality of the Hindus as a nation, and yet one must remember that all this is an endeavour, a blundering one if you will, to interpret spirit by matter, and thus make understandable the great Enigma. An attempt to merge all the activities of life into the Supreme Life, so that the unfolding of a flower, the song of a bird, the cry of the forest animals are one with man in the expression of existence. All the rest is " Maya ": illusion.

Early one morning during our stay at Udipur I drove out to where, in a grove of banyan trees, rise the domed tombs of the Rajput chiefs.

Under some fifty open temples, some large, some quite small, up long flights of stone stairs lies each chieftain, far from city and palace, from the clamour of battle and intrigue. Never for one instant during their lives were they quiet, but here, in the resting place of their bodies, the flap of heavy wings alone breaks the solemn silence. Little tender leaves and flowers are carved on marble pilasters that support the rounded roofs of the tombs. Little innocent looking trails wind their way upwards on the steep flights of steps. The marble has toned to a soft pale cream under the ardent touch of the Sun-God's rays. Has flushed here and there a faint rose. A garland in stone has been stretched from each short pillar that supports the rounded roof and arched cupola. Through the vista of open arches sway branches cool and green. On the slabs of marble lie splashes of vivid sunshine. It slants downwards on pillars and tesselated pavements; on to sheltered paths of this garden of the dead. At the left is a large tomb, within whose colonnade twelve of the late Maharajah's wives, and fifty of his favourites were burnt. Horrible! one says. And yet, are not perhaps the lives of widows who to-day are not allowed to commit "Sutti," even more horrible?

Through the clear air come cries from the distant city set as a jewel within its white walls. I can

hear a low persistent hum as of many voices, and the monotonous beat of the tom-toms. Are there not tragedies there at this moment more terrible than any burning pyre?

CHAPTER V

CHITOR-GARH

BACK across the Sleeping Beauty's Garden and through rock defiles to Chitor-Garh. Then an hour in a tonga on a road wide enough for twenty tongas to drive abreast. For neither the stone bridge that spans the dried bed of the Gamberi river, nor the road, are things of to-day. Alad-Ud-Din passed this way to sack the city of Chitor, and the desolate plain is still scattered with ruined palaces and temples to the very gates of modern Chitor, squalid and up to the eyes in dust.

A Mohammedan festival was in progress, but we pushed on up a steep zig-zag road, a bastion wall on our left as strong to-day as the hour it was completed.

Seven great gateways barred our way, deserted

now and silent. Within one stood a ghastly "lingam" splashed with red, and a couple of roughly carved figures obscene and horrible to behold. Further on we passed the graves of two of the heroes of Akbar's sack, who fought as only Rajputs can fight. Still higher . . . higher . . . to the eagle's cranny, the city whence more life's blood has flowed than from any other in all India; Chitor the strong, Chitor the city of romance, deserted now utterly, irretrievably. On its threshold stands the last of its gateways, the giant "Ram Pol," so immense that it contains guard-rooms and halls. How still the city seemed, its huge uncouth ruins rising up confusedly, black against the flaming sky, with little grace and no charm, but with an awful majesty and a grandeur that comes from tragic deeds of heroism, rapine, or sacrifice. The beautiful palace lies desolate, its outer walls standing but roofless, its myriad chambers, beautiful with inlay and marble tracery, brutally ravaged, laid bare to the sky, to the winds, to the incursions of wild kites and carrion birds, a refuge to jackals and pariah dogs.

Through streets echoing to no single footfall save our own, stony and tortuous where once they had been straight and even, overthrown with masonry that no one has cared sufficiently to clear away since the day when Azenzeb removed his capital to

Udipur, we made our way to Kumbha Rana's Tower of Victory. It stands, nine stories high, above the abandoned city, a Jain building all decoration within and without, a bewildering, ever-recurring orgy of figures; terrible figures, detailed almost beyond endurance, figures like those in some ghastly nightmare. And as we mounted its inner staircase, steps steep and tortuous, worn smooth to very sliminess by the millions of naked feet that have preceded us, one calm, awful face, the God enthroned, met us at every stage, holding the wheel of life with cruel impassivity.

In the fading light the white marble figure seemed endowed with life, seemed the living personality of the dead world that lay within. The setting sun that stained the walls red, and shone mysteriously through open carvings delicate and as transparent as eggshell, might have been the life blood of its victims; and the millions of small sculptured figures climbing its rounded walls, its armies. Was it altogether the fading light that made something so terrible of Kumbha Rana's Tower of Victory?

From its flat open roof we looked down over the ocean-like plain strewn with the civilization of other and far distant days. It lay about the inky walls of the city like brackish waters, stretching mile upon mile of pale grey flatness into the glory of the setting sun. Naked figures danced wildly round the pyres

that modern Chitor had lit in honour of its festival. Their cries came wildly up through the fort. In the fading light they seemed devoid of personality, or rather they seemed to belong to the past, that in Chitor is so much more real than the present. Somewhere, within a stone's throw, lie the dim vaults where thousands of desperate women committed "Sutti" nigh on six hundred years ago. Save once no one has re-entered those caves; and now the secret passage to their entrance is forgotten.

Till the year of grace 1303 Chitor was unconquered, almost unconquerable, the stronghold of the Rajputs. But Vyan-Mata, the hereditary goddess of the Rajputs, came one night to Rajah Bhim-Si, crying: "I thirst for the blood of twelve who have worn the crown, and then I will let the city go free."

So one by one eleven of the twelve sons of the King were raised to the throne, reigned three days, and then went forth to meet their death. But the twelfth, the youngest, was the best beloved, and the father's heart misgave him. "I will be the twelfth King," he cried, "and the child shall go free to recover what is lost, and refound the kingdom." So each Rajput warrior dressed as if for his bridal; and every woman wore her wedding robes; and as the first breath of dawn touched the city the great gates were set wide and through them passed all the manhood of Chitor, to fight to death or victory.

Whilst from subterranean passages rose a column of smoke and the death song of the women.

When the sun set on that awful day Alad-Ud-Din entered a silent city swept clean of all life. Then for the next three hundred years Chitor was alternately lost and gained, until in 1568 the Maharajah Udai Singh, the same who as an infant was saved from death by being substituted for the child of his nurse, abandoned the city to its fate and fled across the mountains to the garden lands, where he founded the city of Udipur.

But Chitor has many wild tales going far back to mythological days; tales cruel and treacherous, and tales pitiful too and strange, but in them always that hint of the inevitable that comes from traffic with habitants of other worlds than ours.

CHAPTER VI

JAIPUR

THE door of our railway carriage was flung open almost before the train had stopped, and a portly figure stood before us salaaming.

Then the figure announced itself as Chaubney Baynath, secretary to His Highness the Maharajah of Jaipur, adding that a carriage awaited us, would we allow him the pleasure of escorting us to it. With a wave of his hand the crowd that always gathers round the English Sahib dispersed as if by magic, and he led the way to where a Victoria and a pair of handsome chestnuts stood waiting. Our servants were left to deal with the piles of luggage, the stout one sat himself opposite to us at imminent peril of being thrown suddenly on to the road, and we were driven rapidly towards the city. "I am

the Maharajah's secretary," began Chaubney in slow but perfect English, " and His Highness begs that you will make all use of me during the time that it pleases you to stay in his capital. All that you wish to see shall be shown to you."

During the short drive to our destination he explained that he was forty-five years—he looked older as natives of India invariably do—that he had been educated at the College of Jaipur, one of the largest and most important of the ten big natives colleges in India, and that he had made a special point of the English language and history. It was at the Jaipur College, he told us, that he had first seen Lord Dufferin. " I was only a lad, but he talked to me for some little time, giving me good advice in my work and what I should do later in the State, for he knew my father and that we were all loyal to the Government. Ah, he was a great man! He was the kind of Viceroy that India needs." And he said this so spontaneously that I think he really meant it, and was not saying it merely to be polite! I took an instant liking to Chaubney Baynath, with his grave, kindly dark eyes that would so suddenly flash into smiles at some passing word; and his high thoughtful brow that suggested no mean brain power. His figure is not so prepossessing, being short and too stout for a man of his age. But all well-to-do Indians of thirty and onwards seem to

be stout. Some people say that they eat too much and do too little. Others more charitably inclined suggest that a vegetarian and starchy diet is responsible for their ample proportions. Be that as it may, our present guide is a pleasant and cultivated man, with whom I had many an interesting talk on life from the Hindu standpoint, when with exemplary patience he tried to steer me through the intricacies of thought and custom of this " dhustur "-driven land. For no people that I have ever heard of are so utterly bound hand and foot by the laws of custom and convention as are the natives of India. Hindus of course more than Mohammedans because of the many gods and goddesses that play such an intimate part in their daily lives, and to whom must be rendered an oppressive and never-ending " pooja." Every act of a Hindu's life is marked by ceremonial. From the first moment that his mother performs mystic rites for her unborn child, to the day when, if he be fortunate, his dead body is burnt beside the Ganges, his life is filled with complicated rites and ceremonies pertaining to every action he performs.

On awakening he turns to the East and worships the rising Sun-God, after which he repairs to the river, or to some open tank, and, as he performs his ablutions, prays to the Gods that they may cleanse him from all sin of touch, taste, word, deed or thought. Then he will probably go to the barber

to have his caste marks renewed, or to have the few hairs that may have grown since his last visit removed. For no Hindu is allowed to retain more than a very sleek little top knot, which is hidden, of course, by the folds of his turban. Chaubney Baynath helped me to distinguish some of the principle caste-marks painted on the forehead. There are from seventy to eighty in all, I believe, but I only succeeded in recognising about eight or ten. The followers of Brahma are shown by a single spot in the centre of the forehead. Those of Vishnu by a lozenge-shaped mark, by a dot flanked on either side by upright lines, by a U-shaped mark with a dot in the centre of it. Shiva is represented by a triangle, by a crescent, a dot and two horizontal curved lines, and by three horizontal curved lines, and by three horizontal lines with an upright dot in the centre of them. The Hindu trinity is symbolized by a dot in the centre of a circle enclosed with a triangle. Besides these there are innumerable other marks to indicate the particular shrine at which homage has been made. As one looks at these strange "brandings" one remembers the continual reference in the Hebrew scriptures to the "seal set on the forehead of the children of the Most High." And in Revelations one reads of the holy ones being known by a seal on their foreheads. The yellow paste used for these marks is made from sandal

wood; the white from lime, the black from sacrificial ashes mixed with rice-water; and these with a touch of vermilion go to make up the caste marks. After they have been freshly painted each Hindu goes by himself to some tank or pool, pours water into his hand and then throws it down his throat, cleansing out his mouth that he may purify his lips before prayer.

When he wishes to eat, more ceremonies must be gone through, even to the breaking of the earthen vessels after each meal should he be too poor to afford brass pots; the very poor and servants generally using green leaves for plates, and gourds for drinking cups.

" Why did he throw away the food he was cooking? " I asked Chaubney Baynath one morning as we were walking through one of the palm groves of the public gardens.

" Because your shadow passed over it," he answered gravely.

I thought for a moment that he must be joking, but he told me that all but the lowest caste are defiled if they eat food that has been prepared by, touched, or even looked at by any of lower caste than themselves, or by a white man. Even water may not be drawn into a man's own private brass lota by one of a lower caste, or by a white man or a Mohammedan, so that at the railway stations the officials have

had to erect separate fountains for Hindus and for Mohammedans, clearly marked as such, so that no Hindu may be defiled. " You can understand therefore," Chaubney continued, " how difficult it is for us when we visit England. We are almost certain at some time or other to infringe one of our laws of ceremonial, and then we have lost caste. When we return to India we must pay very large sums to the priests, and go through a very revolting kind of ceremony or we remain for ever outcasts, whom no one will receive or have anything to do with."

" But don't you think that is very dreadful? " I couldn't help saying to him. " After all, your own scriptures tell you that the Supreme One knows not family or caste, but only those who believe."

" Yes, that is true. But with the ages the teaching of our religion has degenerated, so that many things are taught now that are contrary to the best teachings of our faith. As early as four hundred years before Christ Buddha protested against the abuses that had crept into Brahmanism, and often since then saints have arisen and have denounced many of the practices of the priests, but they love power, and money, and the mass of the people are ignorant, and so . . . . ."

And he went on to tell me that a new sect called the " Brahm-Somaji," the worship of the Supreme,

had been founded by Keshab Chandra Sen in 1865-66, and a church built for its members in Calcutta. They worship only one God, their creed is drawn from the sacred books of the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Mussulmans, and the Christians, and they protest vehemently against blood sacrifice, or indeed any outward form of sacrifice. They forbid polygamy, child marriage, and the seclusion of widows; indeed, many of their widows re-marry, and inter-caste marriages are allowed. The sect is an off-shoot of an earlier movement founded in 1830 by Rajah Ram Mohan Rai, who opened the first "Hindu Unitarian Church" in Calcutta, and invited all who believed in the Unity of God, including Christians and Mohammedans.

Chaubney Baynath fancied that I might have heard of him, as he came to England and died there in 1833. "He was buried," added Chaubney, "in a place called Bristol." Chandra Sen also came to England, thus effectually losing caste, which, of course, he was at no pains to renew. For the mere fact of crossing "the black water," as the Hindus call the sea, pollutes a high-caste man. He was not, however, altogether faithful to his principle, for he married his little grand-daughter aged twelve and a half to the Maharajah of Cooch-Behar, who was only fifteen.

We argued for a few moments on the question of

child-marriage, and my Hindu friend tried to point out that Indians come earlier to maturity than do Europeans. But all the same, I could detect that his heart was not in his words, and later he told me that the grief of his life had been the death of his little daughter, married at fourteen, who had died far away in her husband's home a few months later. " I never wished to part with her so early," he added, " but my parents insisted, and after a while I gave way to their importunities. You see in this country we remain all our lives more or less under our parents. Even I, a man of forty-five, must ask my father's advice, almost his permission before I take any important step, or before I allow my children to do anything of the slightest importance. It is a mistake; I know it is, but what will you? It is " dhustur," the custom. You in your country, if I may venture to say so, are perhaps a little too free, but we are too much bound, and changes can only come slowly, gradually."

" Is Western thought making great changes in India? " I asked.

" Outwardly, yes; the country as a whole is more sanitary; the mass of the people are less ignorant and wretched, and our rulers, taking example from you, are more just and look after their people better. But . . . in things more personal, in religion and family customs we are little changed. In some

ways this is well. There are many things about Western life that would not suit; indeed, would be very prejudicial to us. You have many fine qualities that it would be well we should embrace. Your sense of justice, honesty and truth is, as a whole, far higher than ours. You are more business-like and more widely charitable, but you are also more materialistic minded: less simple in your desires and in your habits of daily life than we are. Drunkenness and its attendant evils are, I venture to think, more common in the West than the East. Many who become Christians do so because they believe they can then drink as much intoxicating liquor as they like. Ah, yes, I know that this is not so. The Christian missionaries are now preaching temperance, but this would not have been necessary before the West came to the East. Here, too, we seldom hear of cruelty towards children, but in England I am told it is so bad that you must have a society, and spend a lot of money in order to protect children from their own parents."

" But this new sect that you were telling me of, is that making headway? "

He looked puzzled for a moment at the term, then he smiled as he answered: " A little. There are about three thousand Bramo Samajists in the country, and about a hundred thousand of Arya

Samajists, the founder of whom was Swami Dyanand."

"And what sort of people join them?"

"Chiefly the educated Hindus. The very lowest caste, however, often become Christians. They lose nothing you see thereby, having no caste to lose, and they gain something, for the missioners look after them, which we Hindus I am afraid do not do." And he went on to tell me that in his opinion Christianity would never make any headway in India amongst the better class of Indians, partly because of the really terrific penalties that would befall them through the loss of caste, and partly from the fact that in essentials the Hindu faith offers all that Christianity can give. "Those of us who are better educated, and in a strong position socially, are less under the thraldom of the priests, and it is the priests who sully our beautiful religion."

But all the same I remembered stories of Rajahs and educated, influential people who were so completely under the power of their priests that they would go through the most disgusting and humiliating rites at high festivals, or on their return from England, in order to regain caste.

Beyond a certain point argument prevails nothing. Probably to a man like Chaubney Baynath, brought up to middle life in a certain way of thinking, the "spots" on his particular religious

sun are scarcely perceptible; and one must always remember that to the less individualistic-minded Eastern it is not easy, nay, it is almost impossible to dissociate himself from the form whilst retaining the spirit of religion.

If he throws aside his religious trappings he is very apt to throw with them his whole faith. And this is even more serious in the East than in the West, where morality is so inevitably part of and the outcome of religion that an ethical standpoint outside of religion is extremely rare. In the Indian Government schools and colleges no religion is taught officially, simply because the scholars may be of more than one creed, and it has always been the policy of the Supreme Government to " recognise " no one particular religion above another in this land of many faiths.

In a country where the last census gave two hundred and seven million Brahmins; nine million Buddhists; sixty-two million Mohammedans; two million Sikhs; one million three hundred thousand Jains; ninety-four thousand Zoroastrians (Parsis); and eighteen thousand Jews; to say nothing of the eight million Aboriginal tribes, that are non-Aryan, and who are, practically speaking, of no religion, that is to say Animists, it behoves the over-lord to exercise strict impartiality. But to a certain extent the consequence has been to make the youth of the

nation practically Atheist, laughing at religion, and considering it fit only for women. Not that way can useful citizens be made for India.

Jaipur has been called " A rose-red city, half as old as time," and as the soft glow of its walls came to me at sunset I thought how deliciously true the lines were.

But another great authority has called it " that pink gigantic fraud "! Certainly the walls are stucco or some such material, but their pink wash in this clear soft atmosphere makes them very charming, and since no one supposes them to be marble, wherein lies their " fraud "?

Maharajah Jey Singh built the city in 1728, removing his people from the old capital of Amber, five miles away. He was a veritable king out of fable land; wise, good, great, who wrote folios when not engaged in leading armies to victory, studied astronomy and astrology, re-arranged the calendar, and intrigued passionately and successfully for love and fame. Imagine in India, especially eighteenth century India, whose palaces and cities are of complex and tortuous architecture, imagine the effect this city of straight, wide avenues, crossed at intervals by other avenues as wide and straight, must have produced! Streets like garlands of roses

stretch level across the plain. Rose-coloured gateways, palaces, houses and shops range in symmetrical array; all rose. The buildings are many arched and cupolaed, " pure Hindu " someone told me. Down the streets pass hundreds in gay attire. Turbans of every colour, blue, saffron, green; long embroidered coats of silk or brocade; marvellously draped " saris "; jewelled slippers; gauze veils laid lightly about face and neck; brown arms laden with bangles; tiny feet jewelled and tinkling. It is a veritable city out of a musical comedy! It is India of romance, of fairy-land. To our right is a fantastic building, its pale rose walls slit by sixty-five windows, by pierced balconies and winding stairs leading to roof gardens and colonnades. This is the Palace of the Winds. Above it is the Palace of the Clouds, and, highest of all, its golden cupolas burning against the sky, stands the Temple of the Sun, a veritable Valhalla. Oh strange people of India! So old, and yet so child-like. So passive, and yet so absurdly gay! From you have come our deepest truth of life and death, and to you our children go for wonder and romance, for the true realms of fantasy. Each gate in this city-marvellous is known by some fantastic name. One is the Gate of Rubies. Another the Gate of Pearls.

And through them pass a never ceasing stream of

people, like pictured figures out of the Arabian Nights. A string of camels, tied head to tail, amble by with their mincing, discontented faces, as if they disdained the very air they breathed. "Oha! Ohah!" cry their drivers, perched like small brown insects on the high packs. Elephants of immense bulk sway gently as they pad through the dust, their foreheads painted in strange patterns of red and green, and gaudy cloths of gold or crimson silk swathing their huge bodies. Following them may be an "ekka," a quaint native carriage somewhat resembling an American "trotter," with a pointed canopy of brass, and crimson or orange stuffs depending from it. Dark eyes above gauze veils peer through the little curtains, and one catches the echo of a smothered laugh or the tinkle of anklets. Close to them pass heavy large-wheeled carts drawn by buffaloes, and filled with a miscellaneous collection of women, children, fruit, sugar-cane, foodstuffs. They have travelled to the city from far-distant pastures, or . . . maybe . . . they are on a pilgrimage. At sunrise or sunset come a procession of women from the neighbouring wells, their brass "lotas" and earthen pots balanced on shapely dark heads, sometimes upheld by a curved arm glittering with bangles, but often standing alone in perfect balance. Not a drop is spilt, and one understands the reason of the incompar-

able grace and dignity of carriage of the Eastern woman. She is immeasurably more dainty and symmetrical than the bundle of miscellaneous and hideous clothing that goes to make up her Western sister; that is amongst the poorer classes. On the other hand, the Eastern ladies, from too good living and too little doing, become very soon a shapeless mass of gorgeous satins and gauzes.

One or two mornings I was up at sunrise, and as I passed through the grey, almost deserted streets I met little companies of veiled women on their way to the bathing Ghats. These were high caste ladies on whom the sun had never looked, and as I followed them I heard the low chanting of their invocations with which they accompany every act of ablution. As the light broke over rice-fields and river-palms they hurried back, with their wet saris washed in the river according to custom, and bearing in their hands brass " lotas " filled with water, to be sprinkled on the place of eating or prayer.

And those who were too old or too infirm to make the journey to the river themselves, offer " pooja " in their own homes by means of the water and flowers brought to them by their daughters and grandchildren. Strange mysterious women of India, who, outside the shelter of your own homes are seen only at dawn and twilight, who would, indeed, feel strangely discomposed were the restrict-

tions that have hedged you roundabout since childhood discontinued.

How one's heart aches for many of them, not so much because of their present position, which most of them do not realise as being in the least pitiful, but for the weary road that lies before them if they too would reach the goal of true freedom. If they would keep step with their brothers and husbands and would successfully rear and teach their children, that they, in the fulness of time, may hand on unsullied and immeasurably strengthened the Edicts of Manu. For any one who cares to study these will realise that in the very early days women were not discounted or secluded as they are now. The practice crept in probably during the centuries of warfare that tore Hindustan from end to end, and was immensely strengthened under the Moslem rule. Now it has become " dhustur," custom, and as such is more than ever difficult to break through.

" And what will your Graciousness be pleased to see to-day? " Chaubney Baynath asked on calling for us one morning.

" The Palace, please, if His Highness will allow us to visit it," I answered.

And so we drove through the Gate of the Rubies, and down the long rose-coloured streets to an immense gateway, on either side of which rose

bastion walls. The gates themselves were of burnished brass that shone like gold in the sun, but within was a wilderness of dim courts and corridors, alternately squalid and magnificent, as Indian palaces are wont to be; and everywhere we jostled against " courtiers " whose tattered finery would have delighted Sir Herbert Tree if he had been " mounting " one of Shakespear's comedies. In one corner we came across a group of elderly men playing " chaupin," the game that in the Mahabarhata, it is recorded, lost the fair Draupadi to the Pandava princes. In another sat some musicians, thrumming on the zithar and the vina. " Oh, how much I should like to hear some Indian music," I said at sight of them. " But certainly," answered our kindly guide, " these are some of His Highness's musicians, and if I tell the private secretary of your wish he will mention it to His Highness, who will be delighted to send them to play to you one evening." At that moment a little dapper man in a black velvet and gold lace tunic emerged from a doorway and came smiling across the courtyard to meet us. " That is the Prime Minister," whispered Chaubney, and in another moment he was salaaming, true Indian fashion, his hands to his brow.

In exceedingly good English he asked us if his friend Chaubney Baynath was showing us all that we wished to see, and when he learnt in course of

conversation that A. had studied both astronomy and astrology, he turned to our guide and suggested his taking us to see the great observatory that Jey Singh had built in the eighteenth century.

"But is there nothing else of special interest that we can show you? Have you any secret desire that we can gratify? Is there nothing that . . . ?"

He looked at me as he spoke, and I mentioned my wish to hear Indian music.

"Certainly. I am very pleased that you have told me. We will send some of the Court musicians to play to you on any evening you wish. To-morrow night? Yes, certainly." More salaams, a handshake, and he was gone.

We wandered for an hour or more within the pink palace, and duly admired the Maples furniture, the numberless gilt clocks, and chandeliers and china ornaments sent indiscriminately from England. And then we passed into a network of little rooms that were full to overflowing with priceless works of Indian art, ivories, and jewelled and inlaid caskets, fire enamels that are made only here in the State of Jaipur, and pictures that reminded one of Europe's most delicate miniature work, and that possessed all the symbolism and all the purity of the very early art. Near by was the armoury, where the sword hilts and scabbards were jewelled or inlaid

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after the wonderful Damascus manner, but that looked cruel enough and real enough to remind one that this was no play armoury, and that not so very long ago these various weapons had seen " active service." From the Palace we walked through enclosed gardens, cool with the splash of fountains; and I could not help contrasting these pleasant, secluded walks with the pretentiously laid out grounds belonging to the Palace at Baroda. Here they had been content with native traditions, not forgetting that the Indian gardens have their origin in those of Persia, the loveliest in the world. The odour of flowers moved like a presence within the silent garden; great bushes of my beloved jessamine, of seringa, of white lilies; whilst everywhere roses, pink, red, yellow rioted in masses of sheer blinding colour.

Peacocks trailed their gorgeous feathers over marble pavements. Above were the windows of the Zenana, and through the delicate screens I fancied I could see dark eyes and pale ivory faces. Further on we came to a lake in which lay something black . . . unwieldy. Suddenly one of the objects moved . . . a spurt of water flew upwards . . . a black nozzle appeared. A couple of almost naked men came and gave a long curious cry. There was a scuffle . . . a sound of muffled breathing . . . and a huge black alligator emerged from the water.

He was at our feet almost before I had realised that he was moving, his long cavernous mouth opening, his teeth clashing together three or four times. With a bound he had seized the blobs of red meat thrown to him and his companions, and there was a fierce tussle between the three or four ugly brutes. The air was filled with shrill cries from the kites and vultures that circled round and disputed the meat with the alligators, and I fled in the most cowardly fashion to safe distance. For I must own that these great wild-eyed birds of India terrify me.

As for the alligators, well . . . rumour has it that they are very ill-satisfied with their present fare of raw meat, the older ones having been accustomed to an occasional wife, flung to them when one or other of these ladies had seriously displeased her lord. At any rate, glass bangles have been found in the interiors of some of them! Jaipur, for all its straight, well-kept streets, lighted by gas, and its fine museum that Kipling says, and justly, might teach South Kensington a lesson, is as fiercely Oriental as are any of the native states. Her Western civilisation is but a thin veneer, and if one chooses to keep one's eyes open, to listen . . . subconsciously shall I say, one hears many a curious thing concerning this and every so-called Anglicized State.

Hard by is the arena where the Maharajah and his

court look on at animal contests. Boars, elephants, buffaloes, rams are pitted one against the other till they drop from exhaustion and are carted away in heaps. None of them, of course, are ever killed, that would be against the Hindu creed, but apparently it matters not how much suffering is inflicted. Often as we have driven through the country we have felt miserable at the state of the cattle working in the fields. Rather than kill them in their agony of disease or starvation the Hindu will leave them to rot by the roadside. If it is against the Supreme Will to take life, surely it is equally displeasing to use life cruelly? One suspects, however, that the whole thing came from fear that if the life of the necessary cow and draught oxen was sacrificed for food, agricultural India would suffer beyond remedy. It was foreseen that centuries must pass before the country could be stocked with the necessary amount, and therefore the edict went forth that no animal, above all no cow, must be slain. For not only is her milk precious, but cow's dung spread over the floors makes them damp proof, whilst that which is dried and made into little square cakes is useful for fuel.

A couple of hours before sunset we started for Amber, the early capital of Jaipur. The Victoria which had taken us for our drives each day conveyed

us rather more than half-way, and at a point where the roads begins to wind steeply upwards an elephant gay with gold and crimson trappings met us and carried us on to the deserted capital.

In 957 Amber was a flourishing city, its streets busy with traffic, and alive with the clatter of horsemen and the clank of arms. To-day it lies silent. Grass grows in its streets, its temples and palaces lie ruined, monstrous cactus choke the entrances to its houses. Beautiful sculptured wells stand by the way, but where are its drawers of water? Where are those that should be at the grindstone or in the market-place? A great city lies here sunk beneath hills and surmounting them; a city enclosed by heavy walls pierced by eye-slits for musketry. Still in defence, but against no foe; mighty, but to no purpose. It lies sunk in a sleep from which it will never waken, to-day as it was yesterday, and as it was the night when its inhabitants fled across the plain to Jaipur, nearly two hundred years ago. For in this country time deals gently with buildings, and a hundred years pass with little outward sign of their passing. It is as if life here had been suddenly arrested, and might as suddenly be continued. If the Rajah willed it, horsemen might again fill the deserted streets, women might come down the steps to the water's edge and fill their lotas in the lake. The courts of the temple might once more echo with

chantings from the sacred Vedas. All is ready; all is as it was . . . waiting . . . eternally.

A narrow way leads upwards beside high blank walls, cut here and there with slits that are filled with rust-bound bars. Rust too has eaten into the iron-studded gates, that one after another we passed through into a mighty quadrangle, deserted; silent. A hundred men might be drilled here. It stands as it always stood, strong and open to every wind of Heaven; clear now of all dust and rabble, waiting . . . beneath the sun . . . beneath the wind . . . for the word that shall people its desolation. A beautiful stone stairway leads to the terrace and the open hall of forty columns where the Rajahs gave audience; and beneath the terrace, amid dim corridors, lies a small dark temple dedicated to Kali. A little black sinister figure of her crouches like some evil spirit at the far end of the niche; and round the shrine lies a court, dim too and shadow filled, exuding a strange odour, the smell of freshly spilt blood, for every morning the terrible Kali demands living sacrifice.

Up and down the Palace ways, through gold and silver doors to small dim chambers and winding stairways, to roof gardens and underground marble halls, where sunk baths and couches of ivory and gold speak of long drowsy hours spent in the care and worship of the body.

All is in readiness within this beautiful palace, awaiting only the magic word to awaken and the old game of love and intrigue to recommence; up on the roof-garden where fantastic midnight Durbars used to be held; or within the women's apartments, behind lattices of pale ivory; or down in the Hall of Audience, where many a rebel, aye, and honest man too, shivered at the glance of a despot King whose word often meant death. Where are they all now one wonders? Kings, Queens, the light o' loves of the palace, the soothsayers and astrologers and " wise men "? Below us lies a whole city of palaces, temples, stables, baths, courts of justice, schools, abandoned to the jackal and the leopard; and only a few human beings walk through the desolate highways that are still as perfect as when they were thronged with men and women two hundred years ago.

As we left Amber the evening sun had set the city in flames, and had woken into temporary life the strange white ruins that lie across the darkening plain, and that are known as " the Palace of Waters." " It is the home now of a gang of robbers," our guide told us. " I should not like to enter it at dusk." Yet we are only three miles from the city of Jaipur!!! A little breeze had risen and the dust hung like a golden curtain, through which the rose-red city seemed a thing of mirage, glowing as with

THE DESERTED CITY OF AMBER

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fire-opals, whilst above, the sky was still a pale clear blue. Then suddenly it was violet, it was black, and the stars shone redly, vying with the tiny flames that curl upwards from doorways of thatched huts.

CHAPTER VII

JAIPUR

LAST night the court musicians came to play and sing to us, and for two hours we sat in a semi-circle whilst seven gorgeously-apparelled persons thrummed to us on the sitara, the vina, and the saringi.

I had heard in the past a little Eastern music; snatches of song chanted in Spain to the palm-trees at the gathering of the dates; songs that had been handed down by word of mouth from the days of the Moors. And in Egypt I had often listened to the songs of our boatmen as they rowed us down the Nile, or as the husbandmen worked at the Persian wheels. They had fascinated me, and passionately I had desired to hear more, to hear many kinds of Eastern music, and discover whether it was the

HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJAH OF JAIPUR

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music or merely the romantic surroundings that gave it its haunting charm. So last night we sat in the ill-lit dining-room, and surely never were surroundings less romantic.

Silence!!! A long almost disquieting silence. . . . Then quite suddenly there was a crash of notes and the coloured sounds seemed to leap upwards in ordered frenzy. One seemed to hear the wind playing among the silken walls of great tents, whilst without on the starlit plain came horsemen riding furiously . . . desperately. There were cries of alarm, and a great shout of battle; and somewhere the mad snarl of camels and the din of furious onslaught, and then . . . the low sobbing of wind once more . . . and the dull thud of retreating hoofs.

It was over, but never was a scene at the Russian ballet given with more wondrous movement or in more gorgeous colouring than those seven musicians gave us in the dim room at Jaipur. And after that came others; some were plaintive wails, as of the soughing of palm-trees in the desert; or the vina, the eldest child of the family of guitars, and dedicated to Krishna, the Indian Apollo, tinkled like drops of cool water through a melody that must have been a tale of love whispered in some Indian garden. And the tender voice of the saringi throbbed passionately above the low insistent note of the tom-toms, played

surely through the velvet dusk of a sultry starlit night. As I listened to this pictured music I remembered that I had read somewhere that the Emperor Akbar had composed a " Song of the Hours," which at dawn and twilight had been chanted by twelve minstrels bearing golden candlesticks, whilst others followed, swinging censers and scattering rose-petals. Quite early in her history, centuries before the advent of Akbar, India evolved what a friend of mine has most aptly named " visualized music."

To-day in the West it is beginning to be—dare I call it—" fashionable," amongst the most modern of the younger composers to write programme music, that is to say music that is supposed to call up definite pictures and to tell without words a definite story. But centuries ago India went very much further in this blending of two arts, and actually painted pictures when composing music, each to illustrate some story or popular idea. There are, I am told, miniature paintings by Indian artists bearing inscriptions that prove that the painting illustrates some particular piece of music.

One of them is inscribed " This picture is the fifth delineation of the melody Megh Malar Salang, played at the time of the rains." Others show that they illustrate well-known legends: the prowess of

the gods, or the loves of nymphs and woodland creatures to be played on certain occasions.

So that it is no mere fanciful idea; indeed, science is proving the contrary, that certain music can be seen as well as heard. Since the vibrations of sound create colour, they must also create form, and from there . . . one has one's picture. In India music dates back, definitely and consecutively to the Aryan invasion, and to this day the seven notes of the scale are said to have come from, each one of them, a sound in Nature. The " sharja " is the cry of the peacock; the " panchama " is the note of the khohila that one hears everywhere. " Gandhara " is the bleating of the goat; the " madhyama," the call of the jackal; the " rishava," the lowing of oxen; the " nishada," the roar of the elephant; and the " dharvata," the neighing of the horse. Each tone of course is but an eighth part of our own notes, for the Indian scale is made up of twenty-two intervals. If, as is reputed, the Indian can distinguish between each consecutive one, his ear must be far more acute than the most carefully trained Western ear. And in addition, he must learn by ear, since even to-day no music is taken down on paper, and yet all through the ages musical traditions that flourished in the Vedic days survive, and are still animating modern Indian music. Colour seems to play a great part in the Indian " picture-music," as indeed is natural,

since sound produces colour. I have had described to me a " very spirited piece of music, the picture of which is a martial figure in gold, his body crimsoned in blood, proudly coursing the field on his charger."

And another, which is saturated with symbolism, pictures a nymph with lotus flowers in her hair, and surrounded by female divinities (or is it that these are merely referred to in the music?) these last being garlanded with " elephant begotten pearls." Asking what these could be, I was told that a very ancient tradition records that in the brain of an elephant is concealed a stone like a wonderful pearl. But the one I liked the best was a music-picture story called " Sarung," in which the glare of the desert with the heat-waves rising and falling in the distance and the mirage of a stream gradually forming on the horizon is marvellously conceived through the two arts. " The quick patter of little hoofs is heard as the thirsty black buck catches sight of the oasis, green in the dazzling sunlight. He gallops towards it. Suddenly the mirage vanishes, and the exhausted animal with its last sobbing breath gives a bitter cry, realizing the nature of the illusion."

This pictured music is taken chiefly from a division of Indian music called " Rag Mela," songs of the Rags or lesser divinities. The six principal tunes of this collection were inspired, so the legend has it,

by the Rags and their wives, the Ragnis, each of whom presided over her special tune. The friend to whom I am indebted for much of the above information, says:—" The general scheme of colour of the pictures illustrating these melodies harmonises with the music, and the landscapes, costumes and accessories symbolize the particular melody. As particular melodies were played at certain hours of the day or night, or at noontime, the painter has tried to illustrate the hour in his pictures. The painter, I may add, was very often the musician, not always a satisfactory thing for the paintings, which were often somewhat crude of execution. To the symbolistic mind of the Indian it is a matter of real importance that these tunes should not be played out of their appointed time or season. Otherwise " the music does not produce its proper effect, but will be a mere sequence of sounds, the vizualization being missed."

Gradually, however, this art of combined music, painting, and worship is dying out, and soon, one fears, even natives in the remoter parts of India will stare uncomprehendingly when asked concerning it.

Early next morning Chaubney Baynath called to take me to the Jain temples at Saganer. And as we drove across the level plains, with their shy

hint of spring, and passed the paddy-fields, my guide answered some of my questions concerning the religion and architecture of the sect whose temple we were about to visit. There is quite a large colony of Jains in Jaipur, though throughout the country they are in a minority, there being only about one million three hundred thousand Jains as against about two hundred million one thousand Brahamists, and sixty-two million four thousand Mohammedans.

As a religious body they are almost as old as the Buddhists, for their founder, Mahavira, was a contemporary of the Buddha. The religion resembles Buddhism more closely than any other religion, carrying horror of taking life even further than the Buddhists, some of the Jains actually veiling their nostrils and ears that they may not by chance destroy some minute insect. "And what of those creatures, too minute to be seen except through the microscope, but which we undoubtedly drink and inhale?" I asked.

Chaubney Baynath smiled and put out his hands, a gesture as individual and significant with the Hindu as the shrug is to the Frenchman. "Most of them know nothing of the microscope, and the rest . . . well, they forget it."

They argue, it seems, that since the divine spark, the soul, is in every created thing, yes, even in a tree or a stone, not even the life of a flower must be

sacrificed, all being destined collectively, though not of course individually, to enter Nirvana and return once more into the Ocean of the Supreme Spirit. Women, it seems, are only accorded a collective soul, being unable to enter Nirvana individually.

But individualism plays a small part in Eastern religion and life, it having been reserved to our own sub-division of the great Aryan root race to develop that form of activity. The Jains have divided themselves into two schools, the " Digambara " or sky clad, in other words naked, and which are the oldest of the two, and the " Swetambara," or white clad, who throw a long white cloth round about them, and it is to the first of these, the " Digambara," that the tenet of women's non-admittance into Nirvana is chiefly confined. Just before reaching the little town of Saganer we passed under two ruined " Tripuliyas," triple gateways of three stories each, and about sixty feet high. Further on was a beautifully carved little temple of Krishna, and opposite another temple with a curious pillar six or seven feet high, of white marble. On each of its four sides are the faces of the Supreme, Brahma the Creator; Shiva the Reproducer and Destroyer, holding a cobra in the right hand and a trident in his left; Vishnu the Preserver, crossed-legged holding a lotus bud; whilst Parvati, the wife of Shiva (known also as Kali the Terrible One,

Durga or Devi the Goddess), sits beside Shiva, together with Ganesh their son, the so-called elephant god with his gross body and elephant head, and who is invoked all over India as the bearer of good fortune. A little further on we passed the ruins of an old dismantled palace, beautiful even now and vast in its decay.

Yet a little further, and we were before the three wonderful courts of the Jain temple. Before entering these very sacred precincts our feet were swathed in flannel and our movements jealously watched, but I was allowed to look into the third and most holy of the courts on a word of reassurance from the kindly Chaubney Baynath. Marvellous is the richness of decoration in these Jain temples with their horizontal arches (characteristic feature) and bracket like capitals, each one a mass of carving. Here, as at Mount Abu, and indeed in all Jain temples, the columns are arranged in squares, and the domes are horizontal like their arches. This arrangement of architecture had not sounded attractive when reading it, but when one saw it in reality one realised what marvellously elaborate roofing it allowed of. Slender spirals of carving depend from the roof, giving it a lightness and richness that even the most gorgeous old Gothic cathedral can hardly rival. And within each court, facing us on raised platforms of marble and alabaster, were the figures of the

Buddha in the three attitudes of Teaching, Contemplation and Renunciation. Beautiful faces, with only a hint of that sensualism that so often mars the divine statues of India.

On returning I was allowed just to glance within the two temples that we had passed at the entrance to the village. " But my own temple of Shiva is finer. It is in the city of Jaipur. I will take you there if you care to see it," said Chaubney Baynath. And so we drove back to the city, and I was allowed to see more of a Hindu temple than had fallen to my lot earlier in our tour, and I tried to grasp what part the worship in the temple played in the life of the ordinary Hindu.

For I had never seen exactly what one could call " services " going on in them. " That is so," answered Chaubney Baynath to my enquiry. " Temples are really only shrines for the images of the Gods, where the priests attend to perform those ceremonies appropriate to the image of the particular god reverenced in the shrine, and to receive our offerings of mint and cummin. There are seven daily services, the chief being the ' Uprising,' the ' Feast,' and at sunset the ' Meeting of Day and Night,' during which the texts chanted and the ritual varies slightly from day to day. But the worshippers take no part in these ceremonies, for only the Brahmins can perform them. They sit for a few

minutes on the steps below the altar or throne on which the image of the god is sitting, meditating on the all-wisdom; but our real pooja is performed in the small chapels or shrines attached to our own houses, and which almost every family, however poor, possesses; for women, except of course the lowest caste, cannot make offerings in the temples because of purdah. Besides these seven daily services there are twelve great times of pooja through the year. In the autumn we have the Festival of the Great Mother, Kali or Durga as she is called, and I would like you to see the Ceremony of Farewell. The image of the goddess is placed for three days in a shrine, and on the third day a Brahman concentrates his whole vital force on it by means of meditation. . . . I do not know if you will understand. . . . In the West I do not think your priests exercise that power? "

" I think I understand what you mean," I said to relieve him of his embarrassment, " in the West we call it magnetising an object. Well, what happens? " for I was deeply interested.

" He chants texts and Vedic hymns, and then the image being sacred, the worshippers make pooja to it. But only till the third evening, when it is taken away, a procession is formed attended by a great multitude, the highest as well as the lowest castes, and the image is delivered over to the sacred waters.

I wish you could see the ceremony; it is a very beautiful and impressive one."

"And is it true that blood sacrifices are made to Kali?" I asked. For I had noticed in her shrine in the palace of Amber a large sacrificial knife lying before the image.

"That is so, and in private houses as well as in the temples dedicated to Kali animals are sacrificed to her, the head being severed at a single blow and the flesh distributed amongst the sick; but I and many others in this country are beginning to feel that these animal sacrifices are not well. That they are not in any way essential to the worship of the Great Mother. Many of us are protesting, and I will never allow the heads and blood of the animals to be carried into the inner rooms of my house and hung before her image, with a lighted lamp above them, as happens in a number of houses here in Jaipur—and elsewhere."

And then he went on to tell me that a society has been formed amongst the Bengalis residing in Ferozepore which has resolved that after some date in last September, no animal sacrifices should be allowed in the Kali-Bari."

"But what do the priests say to this resolution?"

"A few agree. The one at Ferozepore does. Some, the greater proportion, oppose all reformation. Religious bigotry runs very high in India."

I longed to ask more concerning " idol-worship," as the ordinary Englishman calls it, for the Indian mythology seems terribly bewildering, and the capacity of the average Hindu for worship marvellous. The Hindu Pantheon numbers three million personages, of whom biographies have been written down to the third and fourth generation. How far they enter into the realm of actual belief is a question that probably no Westerner ever really knows, for since the Hindu religion preaches that one life permeates everything in nature, from man down to a stick or stone, it is easy to see how these can be worshipped by the ignorant without ever thinking of the Spirit behind the form. Undoubtedly images are, and always have been a help to meditation in the earlier stages of development, and to the realization of that which is beyond words. They form, as it were, a centre point from which strong and helpful magnetism can radiate, so that the tales of " miracles " performed by the Saints that permeate the literature of the Roman Catholic Church contain a foundation of scientific truth. In the same way attributes are given to Hindu deities in order to facilitate meditation; if an idol is painted blue as with Vishnu, this is to symbolise space, blue being the colour of the over-arching sky. He has four arms . . . that is for the four quarters of space;

a conch for the primeval sound of creation; a mace for sovereignty, and the lotus for spirit in matter.

Certain rivers are " holy," that is to say in the very far distant past it was discovered that they possessed curative powers, just as there are innumerable springs in Europe that are health giving. And pebbles brought from these holy rivers are arranged on little brass trays, and the priests drop oil on each, reciting over them various rituals of prayer. A red pebble signifies Ganesh, the God of Fortune; a crystal symbolises the Sun. Bulls or cows always seem to have been regarded as sacred; witness the religious beliefs of the early Egyptians; of the Assyrians; of the early Romans.

And all religions have their " heavenly hosts," Devas, as the Hindus and Buddhists call them; Angels and Archangels according to Christians; Ferishtas with Zoroastrians.

Only the Christian religion, coming to a people of a so much later evolution, has dropped much of the symbolism and imagery that was doubtless necessary to earlier peoples, and though we accept and believe in " Angels," we do not surround them with the elaborate myths that the more imaginative and less materialistic peoples of the East and of the extreme north (the Celts and Scandinavians) do.

In Irish and Scotch (Highland) mythology certain places, such as woods and rivers, have their

" Spirit," both evil and good, which must be worshipped or propitiated; and so it is in India with the Local Gods and Devas. In their several ways it is believed they carry out the work of the various departments in the Universe, and belong to worlds that lie between us and " Ishvara " (as the Supreme Being is called in Hinduism), just as the animal kingdom lies between us and the vegetable and mineral kingdoms. So that it is really more a matter of temperament that prevents us Anglo-Saxon, French, and Teutonic nations from worshipping " idols " as do the more imaginative and more ceremonious nations of Asia and southern Europe. We could not give the time to carry out seven elaborate daily services, and it would seem to our severer and more practical minds that to dress a godlet in raiment varying with the temperature of the year; to bathe and anoint him with sandal wood and sweet spices; to light a brazier lest he should feel cold, and fan him lest he should feel hot; to feed him on rice milk and fruits savours more of ridicule than worship. Indeed, here in India this idea is beginning to agitate many of the more intellectually minded; but the more one sees of India the more one realises the tenacity with which its people cling to tradition. Undoubtedly in time they too must lay aside their earlier and more childlike form of belief, retaining only the deep substratum of truth which they discovered ere

ever our forefathers were even remotely civilized. Truths that Europe and America are rediscovering to-day. As men evolve, so do they gain the power to worship in " Spirit and in truth," rather than through the help of materialistic objects and forms and ceremonies; but instead of decrying a religion because foolish ceremonies have gathered round it (as a certain author has done in his book on the faith and customs of India), would it not be better to separate the tares from the wheat? To combat the colossal ignorance and superstition of India by leading her back to the truths of her own form of religion, and so prepare her, and at the same time prepare his own countrymen, for evolution beyond any forms or dogmas? No religion is in itself " the best," for careful study of the so-called different religions of the world will convince any impartial minded persons that there is really only one world-religion, the rest being forms of that universal faith. When cleansed of their many disgusting rites, the elaborate ceremonies of the Hindu religion suit the people of India. But we in Europe, especially in northern Europe, are developing through action; and meditation and power of thought are at the moment of less importance to us than material energy. Chaubney Baynath suggested that one of the reasons that Christianity would never make much progress in India was that it was not sufficiently philosophical.

I do not agree with him there, though perhaps he is so far right that it is not usually the philosophical side that the missionaries put forward. I think rather that the real reason must be that just as our language could not properly express their thoughts as their own language can do, so our simpler and more direct form of religion cannot content their more complex and, at the same time, more childish minds.

For I think nothing strikes one so much on first encountering Eastern life and its ideals as to see the importance it attaches to the passive rather than to the active virtues. In the West it is considered more important as a general rule what a man *does* than what he *is*, from a democratic point of view. It being considered that action has a tangible result, whereas the kind of thought that does not immediately result in action has a slower and infinitely more subtle result difficult to discover.

If the ideal of West and East could only be amalgamated, what splendid results for humanity at large would be achieved! Which makes one go so far as to wonder whether the coming of the British to India is not the fulfilling of a great world plan.

CHAPTER VIII

DELHI

DESERT had succeeded desert between Jaipur and Delhi. Hundreds of miles of treeless waste, bleached by sun and scorching winds, with scarcely a village to break the monotony or suggest life where everything spoke of death. Whenever I looked out it was to see desolation; the vast unpeopled plains of India curving into infinitude.

The cold was intense; a clear, cutting cold, and as we drove through the sleeping gardens and down white roads to our hotel at Delhi, we drew our wraps more closely round us. Yet it was delicious, this clear, sharp air, fresh as spring water, exhilarating as the air off some mountain glacier, and with just a hint of the sun that was soon to blaze forth in all his majesty.

When we next drove out, some hours later, it hung almost vertical in the fiercest of blue skies; and yet the air was still cold, keen as some October morning in far-away England.

And this is India! At mid-day!

* * * * * *

It is hard to believe that one is actually living in the city of the Great Moghuls, a name that conjures up visions of splendours undreamt of in the West, and that seems connected inevitably with all the distinguished people of one's childhood: Haroon Al Raschid, Bluebeard, the Grand Turk.

Delhi the magnificent. Delhi the terrible! What orgies of feasting, what horrors of pillage and bloodshed has it not endured. Delhi that has been thrice created capital, to three conquering and conquered races, and that to-day has just been declared capital once more.

A thousand years before Christ, so the legends of the Mahabharata tell us, the country round Delhi was given to the five Pandava Princes after their long exile, and they built Indrapât, and fought for it during the space of eighteen days, and won it, killing the rival princes, the Kurâvas, largely through acts of treachery or so it seems to us, reading of them to-day in the marvellously beautiful verse of almost Homeric grandeur.

And later came the Hindu rulers; and then their

Mohammedan conquerors—Alad-Ud-Din in 1304 A.D. and Tuglak Shad in 1325; then Firaz Shah Tughlak, Humayin, and Shah Jahan, 1638. Many have been the horrors committed within its gates. Timur the Moghul sacked it in 1398; and Nâdir Shah the Persian in 1739. Then Ahmad Shah the Afghan in 1756. In 1759 the Mahratta chief, Mahadaji Scindia captured Delhi, and the Mahrattas kept it till 1803, when General Lake defeated the French General (Louis Bourquin) who was commanding Scindia's army, and took possession of Delhi and of its Emperor, Shah Alam.

From that date to 1857 the old capital of India remained in possession of the British, the descendants of the " Great Moghul " retaining only the name of King, and the outward and very restricted show of royalty. The last King, Bahadur Shah, was eighty years old and almost imbecile when the mutiny broke out in '57; and for his plottings, or more rightly his Queen's plottings, they were sent to Rangoon, where he died five years later, the last of the Great Moghuls!

But of all the sacks that befel Delhi, that of Nâdir Shah the Persian's, in 1739, was the most horrible. From sunrise to sunset the city was a scene of appalling carnage. Nâdir Shah carried away the wonderful Peacock Throne that had stood for centuries in the Dirwan-i-khan of the Delhi Palace, and

with it the Koh-i-nor diamond. Persia has kept the throne, but by a curious turn of fortune's wheel the present ruler of Delhi possesses the famous diamond. "Who-so holds the Koh-i-nor holds Delhi," runs the Hindu legend, and for us one memory reigns supreme and seems to obliterate earlier years of splendour and treachery. I mean that ghastly year of the great mutiny of 1857. One's heart aches at the story of courage and endurance set at naught by incompetency; at the individual heroism, and the national inaction. Aches as one remembers the little handful of white men, women, and children that clung to the red-baked ridge in helpless defence all through the long scorching summer, waiting vainly for relief from Meerut; Meerut that was only thirty miles distant! Yet Meerut had the 60th Rifles, the 6th Dragoon Guards, the Artillery, and no small contingent of loyal native regiments, cooped up, inactive, because unprepared! Soon Meerut was in flames and its women and children murdered, and then, only then, its handful of desperate men marched down the white road and across the plain to Delhi. But events had moved with murderous rapidity in Delhi. The ridge was swept almost clean of Englishmen, and only a handful of the women and children who had sought refuge in the Flagstaff Tower were alive when John Nicholson rode into the city at the head of the relief force

that he had brought from Peshawur. He spared neither himself nor others, and though he had marched thirty-six hours through a morass, he fought and won with his gallant 4,000 a desperate fight at Najufghar. Then he returned to Delhi, and waited nine weary days for the siege train; and on the 14th of September the assault began that ended at nightfall with the surrender of the city to the British. But the man who had taken it lay shot through the heart, only living long enough to see the flag that he had fought for flying from the Palace, as it does to-day, as it has done ever since.

Delhi, and India was ours once more, but at what a price! Massacres that were not war, and that went on unashamed all through those four ghastly summer months. The savage cutting to pieces of Mr. Fraser, the Commissioner; the trapping and murder of Mr. Hutchinson the Collector, and Captain Douglas the Commandant of the Palace. The ghastly fate of the women and children.

The five miles drive on the ridge is the saddest and yet the most wonderful thing, for it is there, or from there that one sees all the memorials of that year's endurance, gallantry, and suffering.

The British tents were pitched just behind many of their bungalows, burnt often and rifled, their dearest lying within, awaiting burial. Just behind the present Mutiny Memorial stands Hindu Rao's

house, the key to the position which was so gallantly held by Major, afterwards Sir Charles Reid. Next to it is the old Mosque which was fortified by our soldiers, and round which traces of entrenchments can still be seen. 800 yards further on is the Flagstaff Tower, a large, red, double-storied building, a magnificent spot for observation, commanding as it does the whole Ridge to right and left, the city of Delhi lying within its bastion walls below, and the wide grey plain beyond. It was here that the ladies and children of the Cantonment were gathered all through the stifling heat of that May afternoon, looking vainly down the long white road to Meerut for the relief that never came.

From the Flagstaff Tower we drove down to Metcalfe House, deserted now, almost a ruin. In 1857 the Resident, Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, lived here, and one afternoon in the March of that year, only a few weeks before the outbreak of the Mutiny, he entertained the whole of Delhi, including the native Princes. Even then they were plotting against him, and before the year was out they had died the death of traitors.

What a gay scene it must have been on that brilliant afternoon, the large park-like grounds that surround the pilastered house, the broad verandahs and balustraded terraces thronged with women in light summer dresses and men in uniform, laughing light-

THE RIDGE, DELHI, WITH THE MUTINY MEMORIAL

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heartedly as they strolled on the lawns or flirted under sweet scented flowering trees.

Somewhere a band was playing the sad and seductive waltzes of the earlier Strauss, and little knots of men and women were drinking iced " cup " and eating fruit under the gorgeous tents that had only lately belonged to the deposed King of Oude. Within the house a gay, chattering crowd of guests sauntered through the large rooms, glancing now and then at the pictures and the fine statuary that their host had gathered round him. From the terrace, whose balustrade overhangs the river Jumna, they could look up stream to where the rose-red walls of the city and of the Palace within the fort shone through the glory of the setting sun. Did any of them think that in less than six weeks those walls would pour forth a frenzied mass of savage faces, and that their own life's blood would be spilt, perhaps on this very lawn where now they were amusing themselves so lightheartedly! That before the summer had passed they would have earned the soul's supremest victory over all that is petty, ignoble, vain. Did no one divine in these daintily-dressed women, these pleasant, apparently commonplace men, these little children whose pale faces testified to the toll that already they were paying to " the land of regrets," did no one divine in them the heroes that were to make the whole civilized world

ring with their names? Did no one remember that on the site of Metcalfe House had been a native village; that a tomb, that of Akbar's foster-brother, had been desecrated by the building of the white man's house; and that both he who had done this, and he who had allowed it to be done, had been assassinated within the year? There was a curse on Metcalfe House. Did no one remember it?

To-day the beautiful grounds are a desolate waste, the stately house is forlorn, empty. Does the curse still lie heavy upon it? There is a rumour that it is to be restored, and that the new Governor of Delhi is to live in it. Has the blood of heroes washed its stones clean of misunderstanding, of bitterness, of race-hatred? Washed the curse away?

Almost in a line with Metcalfe House but nearer the city is Ludlow Castle, where Mr. Fraser the Commissioner lived in 1857, and where, after they had brutally murdered him, the mutineers tried to establish themselves. They were driven back, but in doing so the British troops were drawn too near the city walls and suffered terrible loss. To-day Ludlow Castle is the English Club. Close behind it is the Telegraph Office, where the staff remained so gallantly at their posts all through that terrible afternoon of May the 11th, and then, as the remaining clerk sent his final message northward to Amballah, the message that checked the worst of the

mischief in the Punjab and brought eventual help to Delhi, the message that ended with the terribly significant words: " We must close down now," the mutineers rushed in and cut the operator's hands off at the wrists.

Opposite to Ludlow Castle is the Kudsia garden, an old pleasure garden of the Moghuls, with a ruined palace half hidden in a wild luxuriance of creepers and scented blossoms. It was here that the third battery was built early in September, 1857, and opened with terrific fire on the Kashmir Gate.

Perhaps of all memorials the Kashmir Gate bears the most vivid reminders. It is as if only yesterday its ramparts had sustained the incessant firing, as if the shells were still red-hot that had torn open those ghastly rents. Fifty years have come and gone since the blood of thousands stained the red walls deeper, yet that magnificent assault of the third column on the night of the 3rd of September seems, as one looks at the mauled old gateway, horribly recent. One feels as if one might almost hear the command given to Lieutenants Home and Salkeld to blow open the bastions, at the almost certain risk of their own deaths. Home and Sergeant Smith joined the column and went forward through the shattered gateway; but they left the rest of " the gallant nine " in the smoking ruins.

Near by, within a green shaded garden not far

from the Kashmir Gate, lies Brigadier-General Nicholson. On his statue is engraved "John Nicholson"; only that! Beyond is the little church of St. John's, built by Colonel Skinner, whose bungalow stood on the opposite side; and within its peaceful green is an old cross, bearing the marks of bullets fired in 1857. Close to it are the graves of Colonel Skinner and his wife and children; of Mr. Fraser murdered in the fort a few hours after the outbreak of the Mutiny; and of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe; whilst inside the church are memorial tablets.

Our last visit was to the old magazine, where the nine heroic men tried to hold the place against the mutineers until aid should arrive from Meerut; and when defence was no longer possible blew up the magazine and escaped—just in time—to the Kashmir Gate. Hard by was the Lahore Gate, and near where once it stood we were shown a narrow winding street where John Nicholson, his sword above his head, indignation in his voice at the mere suggestion of surrender, fell back shot through the chest.

All is green now where once the blood of cowards and heroes ran crimson, and bungalows are sunk deep in verdure where so short a time ago women and children sobbed out their death-agony. But it is all still very real; brutally, shudderingly real, so that Delhi seemed to me a place to come to as to a pilgrimage, in order to realize, remember, and never

THE STATUE OF JOHN NICHOLSON

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again forget. For West as well as East learnt lessons in the Great Mutiny.

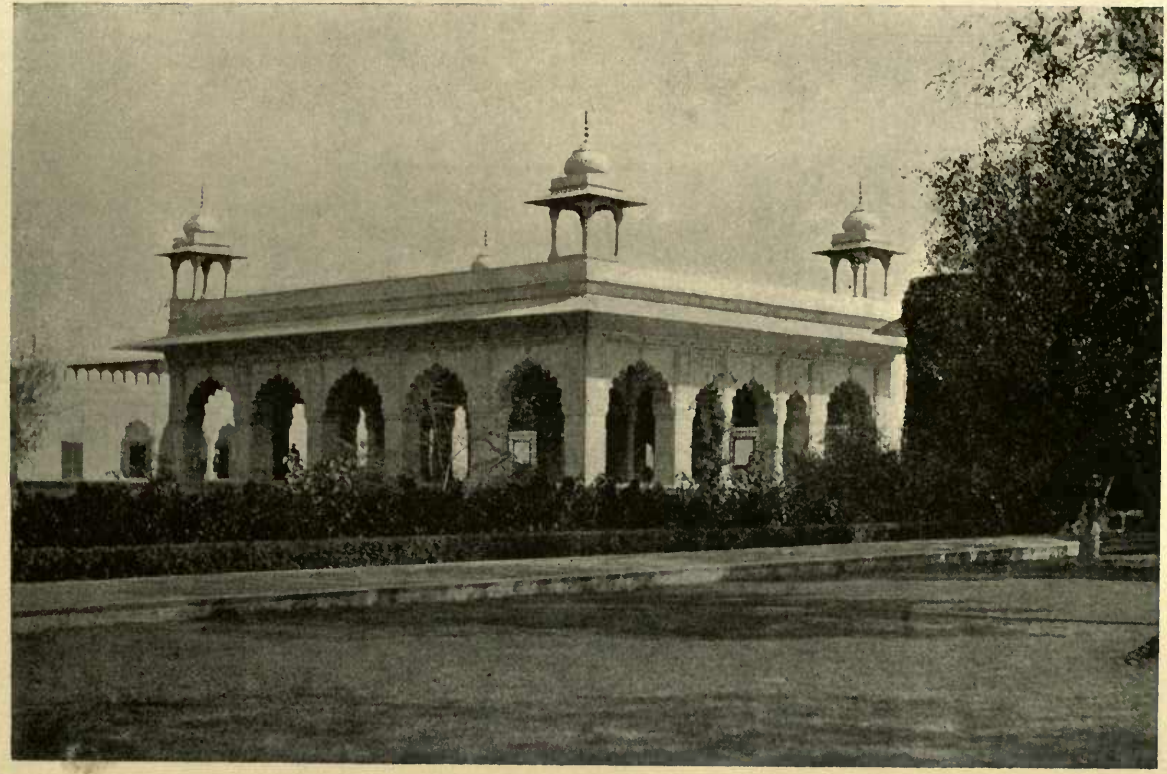
There are other memories in Delhi besides those of the Mutiny. The old red fort, time-worn, grim, is evil with past deeds. Long ago, in the dawn of Time, Yudisthase performed here the great Horse sacrifice, and the sacred Vedas were recovered from the waters of the Jumna.

Here too, in the presence of Nâdir the Persian, who sacked Delhi in 1739, delivering her up to that ghastly massacre of twenty-four hours, the poor old Emperor, Shah Alam, was blinded in the presence of his helpless courtiers. Here in 1803 General Lake was received after the battle of the plains to the north of Delhi; and here fifty years later was held the thanksgiving service of the British troops after the Mutiny. Yet another fifty years and a brilliant reception took place in honour of the far-distant coronation of their White Emperor; and this year the White King has come himself to be proclaimed Emperor before the eyes of his Indian subjects, in the old capital that all her conquerors sought to hold.

Truly has Delhi's fate been varied! The Delhi Gate was built by Shah Jahan (1638 to 1648 A.D.), the Lahore Gate by his son Aurangzeb. The former is flanked by colossal elephants—the royal beast. The latter, with its grand archway and its

vaulted cavern-like entrance leading through the thickness of the walls to yet another inner gateway, deserves Fergusson's exclamation: " The noblest entrance to any palace." Within is a large open court of grass enclosed by those grim sandstone walls, within which stand the Halls of Audience, the exquisite little Pearl mosque, the private mosque of the Court, the Royal Baths, the Zenana buildings . . . in short all the buildings of the Court which once was the most brilliant and the most corrupt in the world.

Up a flight of marble steps stands the Diwan-i-Khas, the hall of marvellous beauty, inlaid with gold and precious stones, and round whose painted arches runs the legend: " If earth holds a heaven of bliss, it is this, it is this, it is this." Yet is there not something even more beautiful in the ethereal tenderness of pale rose marble and cool alabaster of the women's apartments, separated from the Audience Hall only by an open court and a curtain of alabaster as fine as lace-work. The sun glinting through the chiselled cob-web transforms the chamber within to a pale transparent glow, a delicious half light of pearly tints. The trickle of running water echoes faintly within painted walls; through marble lattices glows a world of green and gold, a garden of beautiful flowers and golden fruits and peacocks spreading their gorgeous tails. It is fairyland come to



THE DIWAN-I-KHAS, DELHI

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life; fairyland in which there are wicked fairies and a cruel malignant spirit, for over the curtain of alabaster that divides the Zenana from the outer world hangs a pair of scales inlaid with precious stones!

What justice was meted out, one wonders, to the " Lights of the Palace "?

Room within room lies beyond, like a tale told at night to Haroon-Al-Raschid, each beautiful with inlay and carven grilles, through which many a wistful face must have looked longingly . . . wearyingly, through the years that are gone. It was in a latticed balcony overhanging the Jumna that Zeenut Maihl, Queen to the last and most wretched of the Moghuls, Bahadur Shah, lay intriguing for return to power. On the further side, between the Hall of Audience and the Royal Baths, hung the balconied Kiosk where the King lay writing his couplets, too absorbed or too timid to heed the plots seething within his palace.

Beautiful are those dim marble chambers sacred to the toilet; the deep tanks and alabaster rills suggesting warm hours of indolence and pleasure. Only a covered passage separates them from the tiny mosque in which the King and household worshipped.

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We were anxious to see Kutab Minar, but the

only way to get there was to motor, for it lies twenty miles to the south of Delhi. Motors, however, are expensive to hire, and we had practically abandoned the idea when the Eurasian hall porter appeared one morning after breakfast and said to us in his quaint "chi chi": "There is a nice gentleman who wishes to see the Kutab Minar."

"Oh, really!" we answered.

"Yes. He would very much like to go in my motor car; but it is lonely for one gentleman to go in motor a-lone."

We agreed.

"It seems a pity," continued the Eurasian, "that this nice gentleman and you could not go to Kutab al-together in my motor car." And he balanced himself nervously on one leg.

"Where is the gentleman? Who is he?" I asked cautiously.

"He is here, but he is gone. It would be a very great pleasure to the gentleman to have company, and it would be cheap-per for you."

"But would he care for this arrangement?"

"Ah, yes, for sure. I would ask him. He will be back presently."

And the wily one vanished, to say to the "very nice gentleman," who all the time had been in the billiard room, that there was "a very nice lady and

gentleman who wish to go to Kutab in my motor," etc., etc.

Finally all was arranged to the Eurasian one's satisfaction, and at half-past one he introduced the " very nice ones " to each other on the steps of the verandah, and we all went off in the motor together. The stranger was young, tall, very broad, with a heavy, clean-shaven, good natured face thickly sprinkled with spots.

I judged him to be a German. A. said he was French, and we betted on the chance that one of us was right.

He proved an Alsatian and a pleasant companion, very solicitous that I should look through his glasses, which, by the way, were so indifferent that I could see nothing. Very anxious to read to me in his gutteral English what Murray says concerning each sight. For there are many things to see before one arrives at Kutab Minar. The plain that lies to the south of Delhi is strewn with the wreckage of earlier Delhis. Their immense walls are fallen, their King's chambers, their temples are the refuge of the outcast and the criminal. Once Firozabad was larger than the present Delhi; now it is a little heap of stones. Even the sacred city of the Mahabharata, Indra Prastha, founded by the Pandu brothers more than a thousand years B.C., is now only a shell. A grey curtain of stone, immensely

thick, with a cavernous old hall and a yawning gateway, lead into the long-deserted market place and to a network of small dim rooms beneath the inner walls.

Still further across the plain is Humayun's Mausoleum, father of the great Akbar, whose adventures read as a romance and whose charming nature fits him to be the hero of them. These Eastern tombs are in reality pleasure gardens, beautiful with flowers and fountains, where the court might come for rest or recreation, and which the owner had probably built for himself years before his death. It was here that the descendants of this same Humayun, the nephews of the last King of Delhi, took refuge after the surrender of the city in 1857, and were discovered by Hodson of Hodson's Horse and dragged forth to a traitor's death.

Our companion liked the strong red walls, the heavy domes and minarets, but I thought they were ugly, and let him and A. go up the five hundred steps to the roof top whilst I stayed in the gardens. Beyond lay the plains towards Delhi, bare waste lands, grey and forlorn as a dead sea, the sandy levels broken here and there by scrub and ragged palm trees and strange outlines of ruined towers and deserted gateways vanishing into a golden distance. India is a desperate and unlovely country, a land of strange contrasts and little charm, of a

dead past that has not buried its dead, and that asks much and gives little. Wherein lies its fascination, I wonder? A deadly fascination that almost all feel in a greater or lesser degree, aliens as well as children of the soil; a fascination that brings us of the white race back here, in thought if not in body, and that wins from us the sacrifice of health, strength, often life.

For what do the twelve hundred Englishmen who are working here gain through the long years but shattered health and manifold disappointments that no pension can compensate for? Yet assuredly there is something in India that calls to men of our race; something perhaps in her helplessness that stirs all our chivalry. Something in the ruthlessness of climate and the difficulties, occasionally dangers, that attend all holding of an alien country which appeals to the Anglo-Saxon love of adventure.

Something too in India's vast spaces that strikes our imagination. For let the Latin nations say what they will, it is in the Anglo-Celtic races that imagination lies deepest. German sentiment too often degenerates into sentimentality. Gallic imagination is apt to be a meaningless flow of beautifully turned phrases; whilst in Italy it is little more than an excuse for rhetorical or amorous outbursts. But here in India, amongst those who are living and working for the country and for the supremacy of

England, the whole service is one long romance, with intrigue, disease, death, as very real foes against which must be kept an ever vigilant watch. What episode more dramatic could have been conceived in any novel than the arrival of those three Englishmen in 1585 with a letter from Queen Elizabeth to King Akbar; a situation full of significance when one remembers the part that England was to play in India.

"To Echbar, King of Cambaya, Invincible Emperor, greeting." So runs England's first message to India. "We doubt not that your Imperial Majesty will favourably accept John Newberie, the bearer of this letter, who, together with those that be in his companie, do repair to the borders and countreys of your Empire for the mutual and friendly traffic on both sides of merchandise. And we request that as they are our subjects so shall they be honestly treated and received, and that in respect of the hard journey which they have taken to places so distant, it would please Your Majesty to gratify them with such privileges as to you shall seem good. And herewith we bid your Imperial Majestie to fare well."

So Akbar gave them safe conduct, and John Newberie journeyed to Punjab and lived there for a while, and then was heard of no more. And William Leedes, jeweller, remained at the court of

Akbar and cut the royal jewels. But Ralph Fitch, merchant, of London, returned in course of time to England and spread the report broadcast of the marvels of India and of the Court of the Great Moghul, and Holland and then England sent forth their fleets, and the Dutch formed their East Indian Company in 1603. Eleven years later, in 1613, James I. despatched Sir Thomas Roe as ambassador to the Court of Jahangir at Ajmir, and from his journal one gains marvellously vivid glimpses of India and the Court life of those days.

Almost inconceivable to Western ears are the descriptions of wealth and magnificence that made up the daily life of the Moghul Kings. The gorgeous fêtes held in floating gardens that surrounded their fortress-palaces; one of which is said to have cost over a million pounds. The dazzling processions of men in gold-encrusted armour, their turbans hung with jewels, their sword hilts inlaid with precious stones; durbar halls encrusted with gold and silver; a throne shaped and jewelled to resemble a peacock's plumage, designed by order of Shah Jahan at a cost of six and a half millions. Mosques, palaces, mausoleums, gardens all extravagantly beautiful, on which had been lavished "all the wealth of the Indies."

Barbaric the Moghuls might be in some of their dealings with their conquered subjects, but their

minds, equally with their tastes, were extraordinarily subtle. For in one place in his journal Sir Thomas Roe says:

" It seems impossible to convince these people that their religion is mere fable and superstition. They answer that they do not pretend that their law is of universal application, but that God intended it for them. That our religion may not be false; that it may be best adapted to our circumstances since no doubt God appointed various ways of going to Heaven, but that it is not suitable for them! "

A reasoning that some of us are slowly, but only slowly, coming to see the merit of to-day, four hundred years after the reign of Jahangir!

But meanwhile that little fleet of four joint-stock vessels sent out from England by a hundred and fifty shareholders, whose capital was just a hundred pounds, was slowly, almost imperceptibly making itself felt in India. In or about 1662 the Island of Bombay had been given over to England by Portugal, as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza; so that every native, whether coloured or English, was counted a British subject, and could claim British protection. The group of factories that surround Fort St. George, the nucleus of Madras, were formed into a Presidency, and James II. gave military power to the Company, sending a manifesto to the effect that " the native powers

must in future treat the Company as an independent power, who would, if necessary, compel redress by force of arms." Sir John Child, the President of the Company, was made " Captain, General, and Admiral of all forces by land and sea "; after which they were left to shake the Pagoda tree unmolested for some thirty years. Finally, however, the allegations against the Company became so scandalous that William III. passed an Act to raise a sum " not exceeding two millions for payment of annuities and for settling the trade to the East Indies," amalgamating the Old London East Indian Company and the new English East Indian Company under the title of " The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies." A long list of the Company's possessions followed, comprising:—" The ports and islands of Bombay; the factories of Surat, Sivalli, Broach, Agra, Lucknow; the forts on the Malabar coast of Karwar; Tellicheri; and Ajengo; Orissa; Fort St. George; the city of Madras and its dependencies; Fort St. David: Fort William (now known as Calcutta) with its territories of Balasore, Hugli, Patna, Cossim-bazaar and Decca." The Company had not been idle since its inauguration in 1613! But why should they have stayed their hand, since India had always been the prey of the adventurer, a country of slaves ruled by the strongest?

It almost staggers one to think that to-day this vast continent is held together by a small, far-distant island, speaking an alien tongue, bred in other ways! That it is the white men of our race that have made possible what other races have tried to do and have failed. England and India are the gainers, not the individual men who are working in the country, and the little that I have seen and heard of the people of the country makes me think that they realise it; that they know themselves to be better under the white Raj than ever they were under their previous rulers. The wisest amongst them know that India could never unite politically; that national consciousness does not, and never has, existed for them, principally because, so many who know and love them best tell me, of their crass selfishness. Each man is for himself, or at best for his caste. How can a patriot arise, must less gain a following among a people who can make so little personal sacrifice? What inducement can he hold out to them, if he is honest? If he is really a patriot and not a mere agitator? For he knows, and they know that those who serve this country faithfully seldom, if ever, reap any personal benefit. That their reward not infrequently is ignominy and death. The Hindus are supposed, theoretically, neither to fear death nor to covet material joys, yet as a general rule they are too self-indulgent or too

indifferent to any matter outside their own immediate affairs to band themselves together for the common good.

Why, they think, should they trouble themselves that other men, perhaps of lower castes than they, may benefit? As they were born so they must die, for is not that the law of Karma! And so this fine and helpful doctrine is misunderstood and misused; and instead of its making for increased effort, self-control, and charity, it paralyzes the greater part of the inhabitants of India. Karma and Re-incarnation are not of Hindu origin. Far back in the beginning of time amongst the savage peoples of the earth the belief held that the human soul performs countless migrations, and that the living of each succeeding age are in reality spirits of former selves born in fresh bodies. Ancestor worship, and the reverence that the Early Egyptians paid to their dead was the outcome of this belief, which the utterances of Plato and Pythagoras handed down the ladder of time. To this day, according to Dr. Fraser, it is the general belief of the central Australian tribes. The Jews undoubtedly held it, and Christ did not deny it. It stands to reason, therefore, that such a very universal explanation of life and fortune must possess the essence of truth; but in the way that these doctrines are held by the millions of India they are nightmares of terror and hopeless-

ness. For *they* seem to forget that though we may be reaping to-day what we sowed in the past, we are also, with every fresh thought and action, making fresh Karma. The mass of the Hindus make of it a religion of pessimistic resignation, instead of a religion of ever-recurring hope and effort.

They say, many of them, that since man is unavailing to struggle against his past Karma, it were better to set up no fresh Karma; to refrain from good actions as well as bad, since good desires necessitate renewed incarnations.

Under these conditions existence becomes a terror, and the one all-absorbing interest is: how to escape from it. This is the "cosmic suicide" that Schopenhauer refers to; the stultifying and cowardly pessimism of the East. Speaking generally, the fault of Eastern religion and philosophy seems to be that it is far-reaching, but not deep. As given to-day to the people it is a curse rather than a blessing. A religion of terror far exceeding anything conceived of by Calvin and his followers. A religion too, so bound up with rites and ceremonial, that the spirit is in danger of being lost within its outward trappings.

Many of the Hindu gods are represented not merely ugly (the doll-like figure of the Virgin Mary and the saint in the Roman Catholic church are often ugly and grotesque), but monstrous, bestial.

Ganesh, son of Shiva, one of the three manifestations of Brahma, the Creator, is given the head of an elephant and a bulbous and altogether disgusting looking body, out of which protrude four arms. There is a subtle and really fine meaning in this representation, and if it were properly treated something of the Secret Wisdom would be learned of the people. But as it is, distorted beyond all reason and beauty, the Hindu religion becomes to most of its followers sheer fear and bestiality.

* * * * * *

It was facing the ruins of the famous Kutab Mosque that one realised the magnitude of the gift that India's Moghul conquerors had brought her. Kutab-ud-din Aibak, Viceroy to the Shah Ad-ud-din who sacked Delhi in 1193, planned this marvellous piece of work, and nothing will ever exceed the purity of taste and the dignity of this temple of prayer. Fergusson in his work on architecture says: " The carving of the broken yet still beautiful screen far surpasses anything of its kind in the whole world."

Barbarians were they, these early Moghul raiders of India? In deed perhaps. In thought never.

Surrounding the Mosque is a maze of beautiful cloisters, one within the other. They are of Jain workmanship, and tradition has it that the materials

were obtained from "27 idolatrous temples" demolished by order of the Moghul conqueror. There is a further legend that the Moghul destroyers employed Hindu architects to construct the cloisters, commanding them to build pointed arches, since these were "the true form of architecture." But Jain temples never possessed pointed arches, so the architect was hard put to it to evolve a style, and finally built them on the same principle as they built their domes, carrying them up a certain level and then closing them with slabs laid across the top.

Near by is the little Iron Pillar, the minaret of splendid promise that never was fulfilled. It was erected by the founder of the great Tomar dynasty, over a thousand years ago, and popular tradition states that it rested on the head of a snake. But one day curiosity overcame the Rajah, and he moved the column to see whether this was really so. From that day nothing went well with the Tomar dynasty, and in a few years it had passed utterly away.

It is a strange, fantastic creation, almost ugly we thought; a solid shaft of iron, the most curious antiquity in India. On its face is an inscription in Sanscrit, in which it is called "the arm of fame of Rajah Dhava."

As we left Kutab the sun was sinking in a haze of gold behind a tuft of palm grass, and the pale

violet sky grew luminous with stars. Here and there a turbaned figure could be seen driving his oxen home to rest, and women filled their water pots, then set them on their heads and walked back through the darkening fields. The cry of jackals echoed across the plains. The warm scent of an Indian night beat the air. Soon . . . it would be dark.

Once more we passed the old gateway that leads into an enclosed court, where lies a sacred pool in which bathe the blind, the halt, and the maimed. Earlier in the day we had wandered within and had found beneath trees centuries old a canopy of inlaid alabaster. It is the tomb of a poet, Amir Khusraw, " the peerless singer," as he was called. His songs are still as fragrant as the rose-petals that lie fresh each day on his tomb. An odour of musk and frankincense fills the dim death chamber, where jewels glow softly on the snow-white walls, or lie reflected within the polished spaces of the marble pavement. Near by is another gate of pierced alabaster. It guards the tomb of a saint, Nixam-ud-din, a friend of the poet, whom he survived but a few days. Opposite to his grave is the " Chabutarah Yarani," the seat of friends, where in the long ago the saint used to sit with his disciples; and close to it is a " rest house," where those who came from afar to consult the saint could lodge. On the broad balconies and dim cool verandahs how many hours must

have passed in sweet counsels and keen questions and answers!

Another tomb interested me, strangely simple; the grave planted with grass within perfectly plain marble walls. Yet she who lies within was a Moghul princess, Jahanara Begam, daughter of the Emperor Shah Jahan and of the lady of the Taj. Above her tomb is a white-stone, on which are engraved her wishes: " Let no rich canopy cover my grave; this grass is the best covering for the tomb of the poor in spirit. Of the humble, the transitory Jahanara."

She was one of the links in the chain of fate that drew England to India, for when she was so cruelly burnt that all thought she was dying, her distracted father asked an Englishman, Gabriel Broughton, a ship's doctor, to cure her, and as a reward for his skill offered him, as they do in all the good fairy stories, whatever he might desire, even . . . to the half of his kingdom!

But Broughton asked nothing for himself, only that certain much coveted rights might be conceded to the English in Bengal. Three hundred years later the descendants of these white Bengal traders, and of—who knows—this selfsame doctor, were ruling the whole country. Strange is the turn of fortune's wheel.

Back once more in Delhi, in the dusty, sordid

streets, between low dim shanties within which, in spite of their meagre, sometimes dirty appearance is secreted half the wealth of the Indies. Jewels of fabulous price, wrought silver and gold, kashmiri shawls, carved or inlaid ivories, stuffs woven with gold or silver threads that look as diaphanous as gossamer, and that sell by their weight of metal.

Delhi is unusually prosperous I am told; the rains have come and gone as required, and the Durbar has brought prosperity within her gates. But to look at her one would imagine that she were on the verge of starvation. She is far more sordid and poverty stricken in appearance than either of the three native states that we have just visited, Baroda, Udipur, and Jaipur. In spite of the old rose-red fort, one is struck by an absence of colour and of life here in Delhi, and one cannot help thinking that those responsible for creating out of Delhi a capital worthy of India will be faced by many difficulties.

CHAPTER IX

AGRA

AGRA is only three hours by train from Delhi, yet how different a city! Palm groves and flowering shrubs, green lawns flaunting with roses and scarlet poinsettias against a background of aloes and mango trees: luxuriance, where at Delhi all had been arid waste.

The Commissioner's house, white, pilastered, with its many colonnades and green cane blinds stands in a wealth of vegetation at this most perfect moment of an Indian spring. The large dim rooms cool in the hottest hours of the day, are warmly fragrant at night with two enormous wood fires, for India does not forget the pleasure of contrast.

Tiffin . . . and then a couple of hours' rest. At

four o'clock a smart looking " Tum-Tum " and a Ralli cart were at the door to take ourselves and our hosts to the Taj Mahal.

" But you must have seen it so often," I said. " Don't come just to take us—— "

Our host interrupted me quickly with:—

" It is only the truth I am speaking when I say that I can't go to see that marvellous thing too often. If I have no guests to take with me I go alone."

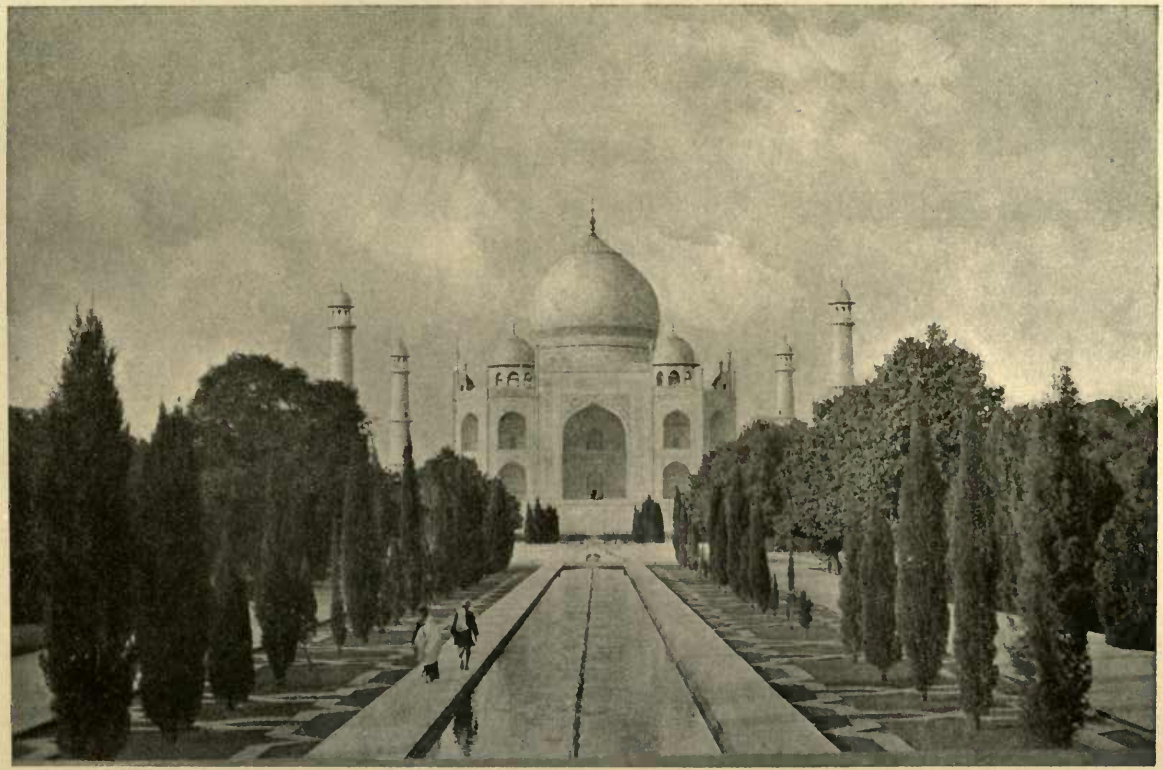
So we all drove together down the broad well-kept roads that surround Agra, and through the lovely park-like gardens that lead to the Taj Ganj Gate, that beautiful prelude to the most wonderful thing in the world.

A conventional phrase! And yet the " Taj Biba ka Rosa," the " Crown Lady's Tomb," is a wonderful thing, because its beauty and power . . . its attraction in fact, is primarily psychic. I think that if everyone probes deep enough into their emotions on first coming face to face with the Taj they will discover that the feeling it arouses, whether pleasurable or the reverse, has really nothing to do with the shape of the cupolas, the presence of the four attendant minarets, or even the colour of the marble. Just as a man who is really in love with a woman does not catalogue her charms; scarcely realises, in

fact, her separate features at all. She is beautiful, the she, behind the features. The emotion she arouses in him comes from hidden psychic forces and not from the shape of her nose or even the colour of her eyes.

The Taj is a very woman, and the appeal she makes is to the temperament and soul of those who come to her, and for that reason those who would know her must go to her, though it be a journey all across the world. No pictures or words are of any use to adequately convey her to even the most imaginative amongst us, because it is not a matter of line or colour, but of actual feeling; and no feeling can really be imagined or explained; it must be experienced. After all, since the greatest emotion in the whole world conceived her, it is only to be expected that through something beyond our physical brains we understand her. She is unique, not in beauty, or majesty, or splendour, but in having been raised with one intention alone, and used only for that intention . . . a thing of the spirit, and not of the mind or the body.

A man may see the Taj Mahal and still prefer Westminster Abbey, St. Mark's of Venice, or the Alhambra at Granada, but not one of those buildings, or any other that I know of, will affect him in the curious intangible way that the Taj will do,



THE TAJ MAHAL, AGRA

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because no other building in the world possesses such singleness of purpose. She alone is a monument to one thing, and that the greatest thing in the world,—love!

CHAPTER X

LUCKNOW

EXCEPT for memories of the Mutiny, Lucknow holds little of interest for the tourist. Neither in the city nor in the surroundings are any buildings of beauty or interest such as people the wastes of Delhi, or make Agra famous through the world. It is not an ancient place. The arms of the royal house of Oude, the fish, that one finds on every building in the city carry with them no memories of fine or noteworthy deeds. Rather it is the badge of shame, since no dynasty East or West has left such a record of depravity, nor a capital such a quagmire of vice. Its very buildings look effete. Huge, foolish palaces of stucco, painted pale pink, green, yellow, and ornamented in a grotesque and purposeless manner. They stand in immense gardens on the

banks of, or near to the river Gumti: and in some of them live descendants of the race that once ruled in Oude, whilst others are clubs, Government offices, or schools. It is an interesting and not altogether profitless thing to spend an hour in the Talukdar's Hall and study the portraits of those dead Kings of Oude, Kings of our making; for till 1819 they were known merely as Nawabs. Terrible are the tales still to be heard of the royal debauches, cruelties and misrule, that lasted till 1856, in spite of repeated warnings. But Wajid-Ali-Shah, who ruled between the years of 1847 and 56, was almost imbecile with vice and drugs, and in General Sleeman's journals one reads: "There is not throughout India another court so utterly opposed to the best interest and wishes of the people as that of Oude. Its subjects of every class have become utterly weary of them."

So the king was deposed, and since he had no children nor any descendants, the Indian Government annexed the Kingdom of Oude, which became the centre, a year later, of all the mutiny troubles.

Wandering through the gardens of the Residency I met a lady old now, but who had been young in the days of the great siege. "I was a child of nine, but those months of the siege seem more vivid at

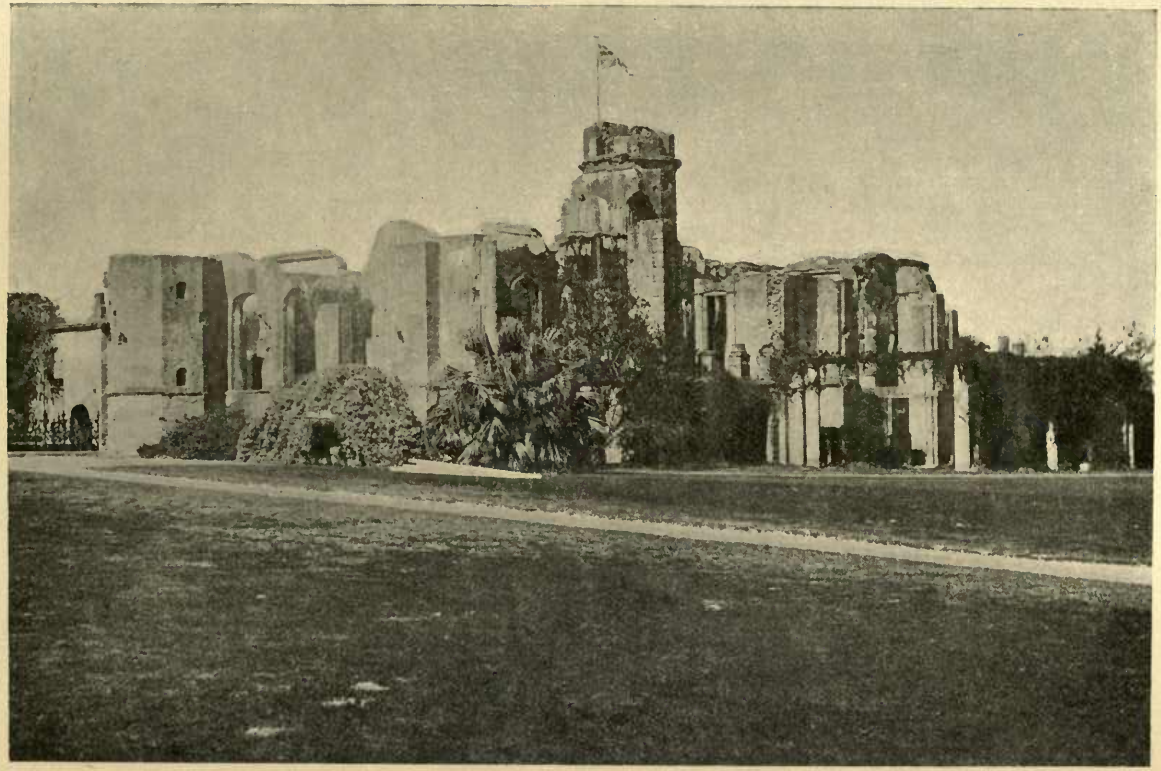
this moment than things I did yesterday," she said to me.

" Tell me about them . . . at least if you don't mind," I asked her.

And so we sat against the red-bricked walls of the Residency that fifty years ago had been shattered in the fight, and she told me stories, little incidents all the more horrible for the frail and yet curiously even tones of the speaker.

Through the medium of her words one seemed to see the little pale-faced children and their terrified mothers (there were 450 women and children gathered within the Residency by Sir Henry Lawrence) huddled within the low close rooms that soon became pestilential through those stifling days of summer. Hot weather on the Indian plains is no light matter, even under ordinary circumstances, and aided by every possible luxury. What must it have been for those women and children, without servants, or even the common necessities of ice, punkas, proper or sufficient food and drink! They were stifled by the smoke of incessant firing, forbidden to venture out for a breath of air, tormented by flies, and later deluged by the rains.

" At first," my little old lady said, " we were too frightened to disobey orders, and we children sat hugging our mothers and hiding our faces against their breasts as the roar of the guns and the shouts



THE RESIDENCY, LUCKNOW

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of the men fighting or wounded tore the air. It's a horrible thing to hear a man scream. One thinks only women scream, but in battle the wounded or dying . . . Sometimes I think I hear them now at night, and I can't sleep for the horror that comes back to me."

Well may the children have been terrified almost out of their senses, children who are so particularly sensitive to sound, and who find it so hard to bear patiently inactivity, and dark and airless surroundings. But as the days passed into weeks they forgot their fears. " We just ran out there as if it had been our mothers' gardens, picking our way amongst the dead and dying, playing hide and seek or ring-a-ring of roses as unconcernedly as if no shells were falling, scattering death to all around. Children soon get accustomed to their surroundings, but the poor mothers didn't. Many a time my mother would catch me up just as I was sneaking out with some playfellow, and begin scolding me for my disobedience. And then suddenly her voice would break, and she'd smother me with kisses. She'd be thinking very likely that she mightn't have me long to kiss or scold. Many of the little ones died like flies, worn out with the heat and the bad food. Cholera broke out, and then small-pox, and the doctors were too busy looking after the men to give us much time."

She told me that she and her mother had nursed Jennie, the Highland Girl, of whom the legends tell.

" And its true, the story," she said, " for I and my mother were with her that night. ' She can't last the night, poor lamb,' I heard my mother say. ' Well, prap's its as well for her, for we can't hold out much longer, and if we fall into their hands—— ' I remember I wondered at the time why she suddenly caught me up and crushed me in her arms. Then she put me down, telling me to sleep, but the heat was terrible, and I seemed to get more and more wakeful. Suddenly Jennie started up, talking excitedly. I could hear my mother trying to soothe her; then she lit a candle and poured out something in a glass. But Jennie kept on saying, ' Don't you hear them . . . the bagpipes . . . they are coming . . . they are coming . . . we shall be saved—— ' Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes sparkling, and with her long thin arm she pointed to the barricaded windows. ' They're outside, beyond,' she kept repeating, ' oh, can't you hear them, my own bonnie Heelandmen.' But we could hear nothing save the firing and shouting of the troops, and my mother and another woman looked at each other and shook their heads. And I just heard the words, ' Light headed. Its the end, poor child,' and then they coaxed her to lie down. ' Oh, yes, I'll lie down

and sleep fine now,' she said, ' for the bagpipes are coming. We're safe.' And she sighed and went off to sleep like a little child.

" Three days later the Highlanders and a detachment of Sihks, under General Outram and General Havelock, stormed the Baillie Gate, and the long five months' siege was over."

Wandering over the ruins, one can scarcely believe that any garrison could have held out from May to September, for the mutineers were within a few feet of the trenches, in high buildings that commanded the whole of the Residency defences, and it seems nothing short of miraculous that a single human being escaped their bullets.

To-day the garden surrounding the Residency is green and peaceful, and large trees that were mere saplings in that terrible summer make beautiful the lawns where men died to keep the flag of England flying from the keep. Its winding steps are broken a little, but still passable, and as we climbed them one felt as if on a pilgrimage. For the old keep, the shattered walls of the Residency, serve no purpose now, or rather they serve the greatest purpose of all—that of remembrance. The one well of precious drinking water to which the besieged stole at the peril of their lives is covered now with flowers, between which lie ugly gashes—bullet marks. The little garrison church was destroyed in, or soon after

the siege, but the cemetery remains, green and carefully tended, and here the men who fought, and the women and children who died in the siege, lie to the number of 2,000.

Within an enclosed railing is the cross with the well-known and surely the most pathetic of inscriptions:—

HERE LIES
HENRY LAWRENCE
WHO TRIED TO DO HIS DUTY
MAY THE LORD HAVE MERCY ON HIS SOUL

Born 29th of June 1806, Died 4th of July 1857.

The simplicity of the words " who tried to do his duty " seems to place before one as if in a halo of illumination and glory the grandeur and nobility of soul of this best of men and soldiers. In the Residency we had seen the room in which he was struck, a shell shattering his thigh. Near the Baillie Gate stands Dr. Fayrer's house to which he was immediately taken, and where he died two days later with the brave words on his lips, " Never surrender."

He was buried at sundown, but none of his officers could be spared to see his body to its resting-place, and only a small detachment of his men carried him to the little churchyard, each one bending a second and lifting the sheet to kiss the cold brow.

General Inglis succeeded him in the command, but so beloved was Lawrence, so inspiring his very name, that his death was kept secret several days.

* * * * * *

On our way to Lucknow we had stopped at Cawnpore, with no intention however of visiting it. Long before, in England, when planning our route through India, we had said to each other, " We will not go to Cawnpore. It is only a big, bustling station to-day; its real interest lies so far back that it will have evaporated, or at best be preserved for the tourist, the person who wants to ' do ' India in six weeks, and who will jar on one's very nerves. Besides, people say that the Memorial Well is so disappointing. And there is very little else to see."

But when the train drew up at Cawnpore our bearer knocked at the door of our compartment and told us that we had four and a half hours to wait there. So in spite of our resolution, for it was quite impossible to spend all those hours at the station, we were to see Cawnpore.

We breakfasted at the station, and then drove out to see those sites known throughout the civilized world, sites sacred and terrible with the memories of the great Mutiny.

There is an indefinable mystery about Cawnpore.

Surely a spirit of the place broods in the air, for it seems as if only yesterday that ghastly tragedy of the Well and the Sati Chaura Ghat took place, and made men swear retribution bitter and implacable "by the slaughter-house of Cawnpore."

It lies bright and sunny now—it was bright then with innocent blood shed under the fiercer sun of those awful midsummer days—no wonder these too vivid memories seem well-nigh unendurable even to people not hyper-sensitive. I have heard it from several such people, have had it from their own lips that they "could not bear the feeling of Cawnpore: that they would rather be stationed anywhere else." When we too found ourselves there . . . well, we understood.

We visited first of all the centre of Sir Hugh Wheeler's ill-chosen entrenchment, and the spot where his brave fallen were buried. Then we drove to the Sati Chaura Ghat, passing, as we neared the river, those trees on each side of the sunken road behind which Tantia Topee's riflemen hid, in preparation for their murderous assault. With its low fertile banks, its calm vista over an immense and smiling plain, the "massacre ghat," as it is called, is one of the fairest and softest spots in all India. Strange to think that it was in those very mud-shallows at our feet that the treacherous sepoys lodged the boats—so that they could not be moved

away. But this was discovered only when the hour for escape was past! The men had already embarked, the women were following. Suddenly there was a cry of fire. The boats, as are all boats in this country, were thatched with straw, and they had been set on fire!! At the same moment the Nana's sepoys (concealed within the little temple) turned the guns on them, and the boatmen sprang into the water and butchered to death those who tried to escape. It must have been a scene of wildest confusion and horror. Nowhere was there any escape; fire, water, a ring of dark faces with naked swords, and above, on the banks, a hail of bullets. Finally the Nana gave orders that no more women were to be killed, and 130 women and children were taken back to the Nana's house, to meet—had they but known it—treatment worse than death. From the massacre Ghat we drove to the memorial gardens, with its well and sacred enclosure that no native is, very rightly, allowed to enter. For historic sentiment is given its due, and the dignity of tragic events respected here in India; the administration not being at the beck and nod of an uncultivated democracy.

Personally, I thought that nothing could be more noble and touching than the figure of the angel in white marble, with downcast head eloquent and resigned, that guards the well. Or the Gothic screen

which encircles it, of plain dark stone, and of a design stern and yet delicate. I know that many people call it an artistic failure, but it seemed to us that this was not the point. It was not raised for the purpose of beautifying the landscape, but for another and a far greater purpose, in the achievement of which it achieved the true object of art—inspiration.

Near by, marked by a white cross, is the site of "Bibi Ghar," the ladies' house; the house of the massacre of those 250 women and children. And just beyond is the tree on which General Neill hanged scores of rebels, after forcing them to enter the house and lick the fresh-spilt blood from its floor.

No wonder the sense of its past still hangs about Cawnpore. No wonder the Highlanders broke loose in the bazaars and killed dozens, some say hundreds, of the natives.

An old man, a veteran who had been through the Mutiny at Cawnpore, gave me a rose off one of the graves. From time to time he spoke of the events in a few disjointed sentences. It was still very real to him. It became, and now will always be, desperately, horribly real to us.

We drove back across the Gardens, so beautiful with their lawns, green as one fancies one can find grass only in England, their wealth of roses, their trees smothered in bourgonvillia, and then along a

dusty road that brought us to the church again. How English it was! So English that it seemed to bring the very soul of England back to us with all her struggles, agonies, and triumphs. We were shown in the vestry a sketch made by one of the officers of the Bibi Ghar as it had looked immediately after the massacre. Shoes, torn parts of ladies' dresses, broken earthenware, a child's hat with its ribands, a glove, a Bible, a woman's foot hacked off at the ankle and still standing in its shoe . . . blood everywhere . . . everywhere. On the wall, at such a height as a man's arm would reach, was the dark imprint of a bloody hand, and agonised messages were scrawled in blood on the walls.

CHAPTER XI

BENARES

We reached the most sacred city of the Hindus very late one night, so late indeed that a light supper and bed immediately succeeded our arrival.

How is it that one sleeps so well here in India? Even after a long railway journey! Is it that the railway carriages are so large and airy, and that one can lie down and sleep during their slow transit across the plains of India, thus avoiding the back-aches and cramped limbs almost inseparable from railway journeys in Europe? Or is it that one is breathing all the while the pure air of wide empty spaces uncontaminated by any sign of humanity, through which the sun beats fiercely his life-giving rays, tempered by little wandering winds as cool and fresh as well water? For whatever reason, I woke

this morning soon after half-past five with a delicious sense of repose, and a desire to get up immediately. My little simple white-painted chamber opened on to the verandah, as do all Indian bedrooms: its windows wide open, for one's native servants sleep across their threshold. I pushed aside the bead curtains, and their faint tinkle awakened the Ayah.

"Mem Sahib want me?" she ejaculated, almost before she was awake, and she threw aside her blanket and drew upwards round her small dark head her gold-edged sari.

"Yes, Ayah, I want you to get me some hot water; I want to go out." Almost before the words had left my lips she had disappeared down the dim verandah, her brass pot in her hand; and I stood for a moment drinking in the cold pure air that came to me across the sleeping garden.

How still it always is, this hour before dawn. How dark. No gradual awakening as in northern lands. No clear glad call of birds. That faint announcement of the presence of yet another mystery, a new day, can scarcely penetrate the darkness of the Indian dawn.

I hurried through my dressing, and it was still dark as I stepped out into the verandah and passed vague forms shrouded in risais; servants sleeping at their masters' doors. Three miles divide the Cantonment, where the bungalows and hotels are

situated, from the city, and it was as if we were driving through magical violet draperies that at our approach parted to disclose tawny jungles of palm and undergrowth. Stars burnt golden in a pale sky, colouring mists that lay, gossamer-like, over rice fields. Low huts were scattered here and there, black patches in the starlight. A sudden swerve and we were in the city, strangely still, with here and there shrouded figures moving furtively from one doorway to another . . . women doubtless on their way to bathe in the sacred Ganges.

A few lights flickered in the bazaars. From the roof-tops came the tinkle of jewelled feet and the outline of women's forms in the starlight. A sound of monotonous chanting fell through the darkness . . . a prayer to the Sun God. At the open doorways a veiled figure could be seen bending down and drawing the outlines of leaves or flowers on the pavement—the ceremony of the salutation to the new day.

Another turn, and we were at the river. A clamour of voices seemed suddenly to fill the air, and strange outlines of dusky figures escorted us to a large painted barge.

A hint of dawn came from the East . . . a streak of burnished copper; an underglow of rose. Gigantic palaces loomed mysteriously through the mist, their colossal rock stairways leading steeply

to cavernous gateways and over-hanging porches. A stream of pilgrims in their saffron robes issued from narrow byways chanting as they came. The light was deepening every moment, in that stupendous hush that seems to herald the Indian day.

Suddenly . . . the sun rose from the wide sandy wastes that lie on the further side of the Ganges. The sacred river gleamed like some great topaz-coloured snake. The whole sky all at once was one supreme glory of opal fires above dusky confining bars of night, and the river became a solid path of molten gold. The Sun God had come into his own; victoriously he flung his rays across parched and level plains; on golden domes and pennants that mark the temples of Shiva; on thousands of brass and copper pots lining the ghâts, or carried aloft on women's shoulders. It was as if the whole vast semi-circle had become one all-embracing Sun-Temple.

Is it fantastic to imagine that perhaps the very reason for the building of Benares was for the worship of the Sun God? That the Aryan tribes that settled here from Northern India about three thousand years ago did but continue the tradition of earlier days. For Benares faces due East. Every morning it witnesses the ever marvellous phenomenon of returning life. Here in a clearing

of dense forests the Kalis, one of the first of the Aryan tribes to settle here, built their little huts and cultivated the land, the Ganges being at once the inspiration of their faith and the highway whereby they might rejoin their kindred in Northern India, and which, together with the smaller rivers to north and south, protected them from the Aboriginal tribes.

Those that immediately surrounded them were subdued and given the more menial tasks to perform; but marriage, or any intimate intercourse between the two races was strictly forbidden: a prohibition that generated the caste system, very necessary in those days if the newcomers were not to be completely submerged in the existing tribes.

And so here were preserved the Aryan traditions, brought from the tablelands of Asia, which still form the foundations of Hindu thought and custom to-day.

Here began the compilation of those magnificent stores of Aryan wisdom, the Vedic hymns, invocations to the forces of nature . . . to Indra God of rain, to Agni God of fire, to Surya, " the soul of all that moveth and that moveth not." Here were evolved the Brahmanas that embody Hindu ritual and contain the Hindu legends of creation. And the Upanishads, which form the basis of the later Hindu philosophy.

All were handed down by word of mouth, and long after Sanskrit ceased to be a spoken language, this mighty legacy of Aryan philosophy, continually added to, was memorised word for word, the very accent and intonation of each word being faithfully copied. A Brahman who divulged any part of this sacred literature to unauthorised persons was subjected to the most horrible tortures. Gradually the simple forms of Aryan prayer and praise degenerated into a kind of magic, understood only by the priests, who therefore could extort much money so that these rites might be performed correctly. And now . . . well, the wisdom remains as the foundation of much charlatism . . . that to-day also must be paid for.

Up and down the stone steps came men and women dressed in all the colours of the rainbow. Into the river they flung flowers and strange offerings, and the splash of water seemed to throw up a shower of gold-dust. By twos and threes they waded out into the stream; and then began that curious complication of ritual, at once absurd and yet rather beautiful. The Brahmans performed the most complicated form of " Sandhya," spiritual exercise.

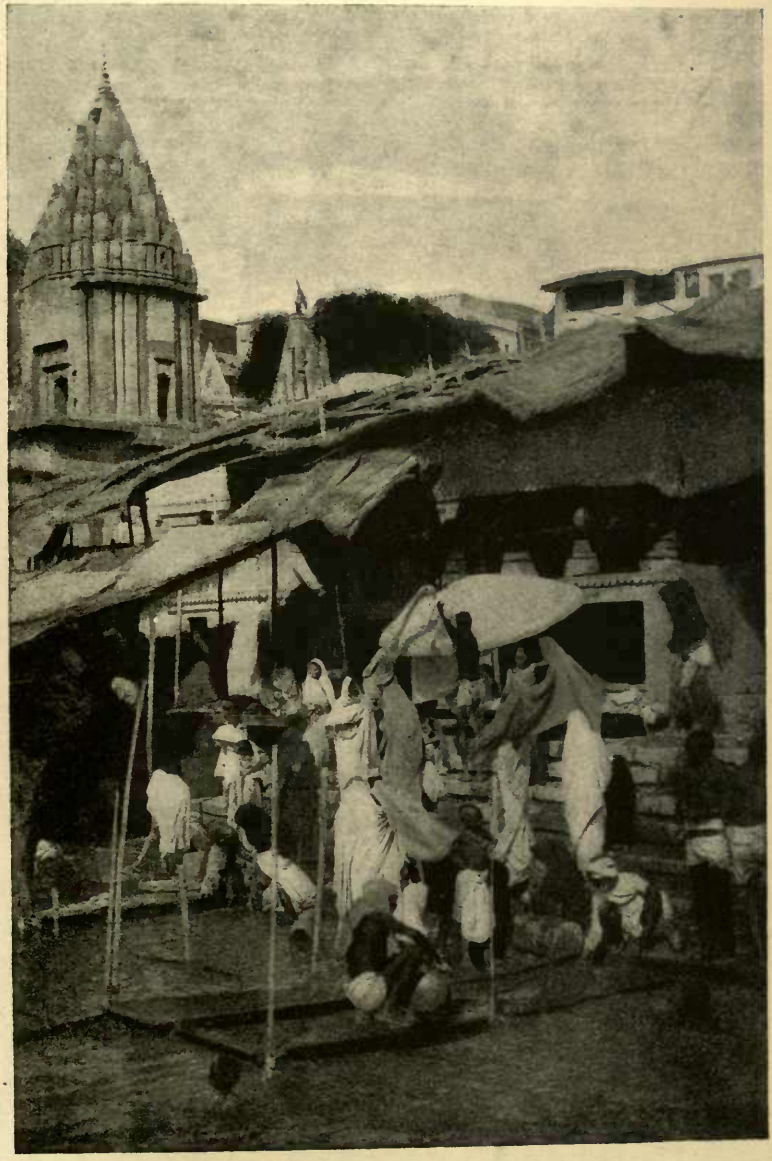
At dawn, at mid-day, at sunset, they must repeat a certain formula, freeing in this way the soul from all earthly contamination and placing it in harmony with the super-physical worlds. They take Ganges

water in their hands and pour it over their heads, thus freeing their body from sin. Then they shift the " upavita," the Brahmanical thread, from their right shoulders to their left, and taking some water in their right hands allow it to fall over the five fingers. After that the thread is hung about the neck, and water is poured between the forefinger and thumb. These are the rites addressed to the Devas and Rishis—gods and sages. Then follows the exercise of breathing " Prana-yama." The right nostril is closed and the breath expelled through the left. Then the breath is taken through the left and expelled through the right. Finally the breath is held for as long a time as possible. In England we do all this for the good of our health, but in India it is performed as a religious ceremony.

After this the ten incarnations of Vishnu are represented by the play of fingers and thumb, and the sacred " mantras " (texts from the Vedas) are muttered under the breath, lest the low-caste should hear. For high-caste and low-caste, Brahman and Sudra, bathe here side by side, the sacred Ganges cleansing all from pollution.

From within dim temples came the sound of chanting. The ritual of the Uprising was being performed.

Women passed in procession through the dawn to offer " poojah," their hands full of offerings—



THE BATHING GHAT, BENARES

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sandal wood powder, ghee, and rice. These they would lay before the god, with chaplets of marigolds or jessamine, and prayer gongs sounded and the sacred conches were blown as a signal that the god is awakening. Down the hill in the full glory of the rising sun came a little party of people bringing their dead to the Burning Ghât. Here on a low wooden stretcher they leave her, a woman wrapped in a red cotton sari. A pile of logs lies beneath and around her, all that her husband has been able to afford, and though at first the flames blazed merrily, licking their way through the splintered wood to the delicate limbs of the little frail body, they cannot reduce it to ashes. A slender foot breaks off short at the ankle. An arm falls suddenly into the flames. Then the body collapses as if broken in two, leaving two charred ends . . . a little heap of half-burnt flesh. Above, the fevered eyes of some sick man look down in half longing, half fear. He has been brought perhaps many miles and at much trouble and expense to die beside the sacred river, but . . . he has not died. Soon his relations must return to their homes, and if he is not dead . . ! But in Benares there are ways of hastening the glad hour. The mouth and nostrils can be filled with Ganges mud, and the sick one bathed in the waters, and then . . . well, then the Mother of Rivers takes the

spirit to herself. Only the poor body remains, which . . . at last . . . can be burnt!

We were fortunate in seeing a very interesting and an unusual ceremony, that of the burial in the Ganges of a holy man, a Yogi. Only these and the Brahmani are allowed this privilege, the rest of humanity. even including Maharajahs, must first be burnt and their ashes flung into the river.

They brought the saint down to the water's edge in a covered palanquin, followed by an immense multitude, and there was a sound of wailing in the air, and the odour of incense, mingling with the faintly aromatic scent of the marigold, Parvatis flower, Parvati the wife of Shiva, special deity of Benares; Parvati the Hindu Venus.

The palanquin was placed at the head of the Ghat, and eight Brahmans that had been its bearers drew aside the curtains. The crowd strained nearer, swaying this way and that, eagerness burning in their faces and sharpening their eyes. Suddenly . . . there was a roar of voices. The saint had been lifted on to the stone seat, his long naked figure, desperately thin, exposed to every gaze, his head dropping this way and that on his chest, his poor glazed eyes staring out across his hundreds of worshippers, across the sacred river and arid plain, a piteous humiliated sight. And some laughed at the helpless foolish attitudes of him who had been

accounted a saint, but others pressed closer to touch the hem of his loin cloth, or the bench on which he was seated. One of the Brahman priests supported him, striving to prevent the poor old head from falling into undignified attitudes; whilst the others prepared the marble slabs that were to form his last earthly resting place. And the crowd pressed closer . . . closer, clambering on to the steps of temples and shrines. Little children were held aloft that they too might see the gruesome ignoble sight. Men fought with one another and with women, pushing them aside, trampling on them in their eagerness to touch something that the holy one had touched, and so gain merit.

Garlands of jasmine and marigold were thrown round the poor shrunken, naked body. White and gold blossoms fell at his feet. Often they never reached him, but dropped into the waters of the Ganges or were trampled under foot by the crowd. The sacred conches blared forth acrid notes, making a sullen booming undercurrent to the monotonous chanting of thousands. There was a roar of voices. The crowd went well-nigh mad with religious excitement. And in the midst of it all sat the lean brown figure of the saint, a foolish lear on his old face, a sudden drop of the whole body proclaiming the desperate absurdity of materialism in religion.

The Buddha came to reform Brahmanism (as it

was called in his day), and many have been the reformers that have arisen since then, yet now . . . one's chief thought as one watched the great religious pageant from the river's bank at Benares was . . . surely the hour has come for yet another "Enlightener."

The crowd pressed closer, many bearing on their shoulders the sick that they might feast their eyes on the dead body. Pilgrims shrieked without ceasing, "Ram, Ram."

But the old brown body heeded them not. For the last time his face had fallen in his knees and he was enclosed within four marble slabs that formed his death chamber. The body, though shockingly thin, was tall, and the head protruded above the hastily arranged walls. It was given a shove, and was forced down far enough to allow the lid of the box to be adjusted. Little reverence was shown him. He may have been a saint in life, but to-day it was but a dead body! The box was corded and then deposited on to a large gaily-painted barge with carved and upraised bows, reminding one of a Viking galley. Slowly it was taken down the river, followed by the songs of the pilgrims and the voices of the multitude crying, "Ram, Ram." And the cry was taken up until the whole riverside echoed to a wild frenzy of worship. At last, opposite the burning Ghat, he was committed to the waters of

the Ganges, the Mother of ALL. And it is this water in which Hindus from all parts of India bathe! It is this water that they drink and carry away with them in leathern bottles to keep against some dire sickness or sudden calamity! It seems incredible that all who come to Benares, white or brown, do not die of the plague. One begins to wonder . . . can there be something miraculous in the waters of the Ganges, as her worshippers aver! Is their belief then not mere superstition?

A few years ago an experiment was made by a Government analyst. Water was taken from the main sewer of Benares containing not unnaturally millions of cholera germs. These were emptied into a tank containing Ganges water. In six hours the germs, instead of multiplying of their kind, died! The analyst then took ordinary filtered water and emptied into it cholera germs. They multiplied exceedingly. Some say that the water of the Ganges contains antiseptic properties . . . hence its " sanctity." Others, that the sun, that marvellous purifier and vitaliser, has cleansed it of all impurity. What matters the explanation since it is so, and faith is thereby justified.

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Another ceremony that I saw take place in the

Ganges was wholly beautiful. It was a marriage ceremony, and the boy bridegroom rode down the steep banks to the river's edge on a magnificent white horse, the newly-risen sun shining on his jewels, and lighting up the gold threads in his green brocaded tunic, so that to my unaccustomed Western eyes he might have ridden straight out of " The Arabian Nights," so orientally gorgeous was his dress.

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My first, my last, my most abiding feeling concerning Benares was the sensation of its antiquity. It seemed old, so old and in rather a horrible way, as if it had aged not legitimately and naturally, but in some ghastly manner. In its narrow streets, so narrow that one can place a hand on either side of them, I seemed to have descended into the womb of time. The time of thought, of experience, in which one year may be as a hundred so heavy is it with the knowledge and thought of evil.

All cities contain evil, but all cities do not suggest evil. They seem to have their " daemon " or over soul; and some appear masculine and some feminine.

Delhi is pre-eminently masculine; Agra, with its gardens, its suddenly conceived and suddenly abandoned city of Fateh-Pur, its Taj is feminine.

Jaipur seems a joyous, laughter-loving girl; Chitor harbours a spirit of cruelty; a grim implacable spirit that stoops neither to wile nor tenderness. Udipur is more fascinating. A fair white treacherous thing, less strong than Chitor, but more dangerous. But Benares, in spite of the sojourn near by of the Buddha, in spite of its cult of sun and river, in spite of its many really earnest pilgrims that pass through the city in their thousands, seems to me indescribably evil. I shall never forget the river banks as I saw them at night—gruesome beyond words, black with shadows, while between, the river seemed a path of living fire. Few barges, save our own, were about. The burning Ghâts were empty. The strings of pilgrims and the knots of fakirs round about their straw umbrellas had drifted back to the town. Every now and again a man or woman in gay clothing, brilliant greens or yellows, or soft coral pinks passed in silent procession against the sombre walls of the palaces. They seemed as figures in tapestry, or in some antique Pompeïn frieze.

The foundations of the huge palaces lining the river are laid almost bare at this time of the year. The water has receded now, to return only in the rains, when they rise above these great pyramids of steps that to-day are grim and deserted. No one passes in or out of the cavernous gateways. No one climbs the stairs. Gigantic, hoary with age, their

blind walls broken by protruding balconies, crumbling into yellow dust . . . they are like evil old men or women, old with too much living and knowledge.

High up on the colossal walls are barred windows out of which no one looks. Who is within? Who can be within? Each of these ghost-like palaces were built in the long ago by some one of the many Hindu Princes—Gwalior; Man Shingh of Amber; Nepal; Nagpur. But they seldom if ever inhabit them. Who then lives in them? These silent mysterious prisons of time? A few old servants perhaps. A few ghosts; wrecks of something that might once perhaps have been fair. Something intangible seemed to creep out of the shadowy gateways and down the narrow snake-like stairs that is called the Thief Ghât, because here some celebrated thief stole down to bathe unobserved in the Ganges.

Thrown, as if by some horrible contortion of nature, lies the gigantic foundations and scattered doorways and palaces that were raised by Baija Bai to her dead lord of Gwalior. The tremendous weight of the masonry caused a landslip, and the work was abandoned before it was completed, to lie, as it fell, half in, half out of the water in grotesque attitudes.

Before we left the river the moon had risen behind the mosque of Arangzib, the only really

beautiful building on the river, with its slender minarets like pointing fingers, suggesting peace where everything else suggests evil.

Yet it was hatred and jealousy that was the motive of its erection, since the Moghul Emperor built it on the site of a temple of Shiva, in order to mortify the conquered Hindus. Within the sunless streets of Benares, so narrow that arms can span them, are shrines, mere niches in the walls, that rise steeply to a strip of blue, all that Benares knows of the sky. Blank walls that conceal hundreds of fellow creatures, and surrounding them a labyrinth of evil-smelling alleys that wind their devious ways to the Golden Temple, the centre of Hinduism, Shiva's great shrine.

Such a poor squalid thing it seemed as one saw it from the quadrangle, in which the gold and white of fallen blossoms lay dying in the mud. Opposite is a lean, tall house, and up its winding stair we came to a small projecting balcony, from which we could look down into the corridors, and on to the golden roof of the Temple. This is the goal of countless pilgrimages!

This, and also the Well of Knowledge, but a stone-throw away, a square, unlovely receptacle of dead flowers, set within a filthy courtyard! Beyond sits a leering figure of Gânesh, the Elephant God, its red inflated body wreathed in garlands that

seemed to accentuate its bestiality. Men and women lay prostrate before it and on the steps of the Well of Knowledge, rolling to and fro in the mud, crying to the Gods, and especially to Shiva, for it is here, so the priests tell them, that he dwells, waiting to be propitiated with offerings of milk, flowers, and sweetmeats. With money too, paid, of course, to their earthly representatives, the priests.

A little further down, in yet more tortuous streets, is the Annapurna Temple, dedicated to the Cow Goddess, and one of the very few opened to foreigners. Here, well-fed cows stand hour after hour turning over the food that their worshippers bring them, and gazing with calm bored eyes at the men and women grovelling at their feet. The stench is truly terrific . . . yet this is a temple.

But to me still more terrible is the so-called monkey temple, because here hundreds of monkeys of all sizes and degrees of ferocity are kept. The presiding deity of this temple is Durga, that fierce Mother of Evil that must needs be propitiated with blood.

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One afternoon we drove to Sarnath, three and a half miles from Benares, through dim avenues of mango and banyan trees. Between their immense

THE MONKEY TEMPLE, BENARES

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trunks and hanging branches lay the tender green of young corn; the vivid flare of marigolds; the clumps of cotton and sugar cane. The whole country lay rejoicing in the newly-come spring, in India so pathetic in its short-lived beauty. Birds called drowsily to each other through the golden glory of the afternoon. Peacocks spread their tails against the blue dusk of interlaced shadows. The air grew slumberous under the " creek " of the water wheels, a monotonous sound infinitely reposeful. Now and then came a sudden flutter of green and gold wings, as a dozen parrots flew from tree to tree.

Water rills seamed the freshly turned palm-groves, and camels padded across the green plains. How quickly India comes into her adolescence!

At last we reached the spot that in the Buddha's day was known as the Deer Forest, and that to-day is covered with the ruins of shrines, stupas, and monastic buildings. For when he became the Buddha (the Enlightener), he founded a religious order, the " Sangha," and for many years after his death, when Buddhism under Asoka became the State religion, this spot, hallowed by his memory, was marked by mighty stone columns, temples and monastries. A Chinese pilgrim journeyed all the way from China to Sarnath in order to study the teachings of the Master, and it is from his account,

written in 400 A.D., that archæologists have been able to reconstruct to a certain degree the Buddha's Deer Park.

Much has been destroyed since then by the fierce onslaughts of Mohammedan conquerors, who swept with the sword these groves that hitherto had known only gentleness and love. Much also has been discovered and restored to its rightful place, many years later, by the people of an alien race and of a religion different, and yet the same, since it too is the faith of love and mercy.

The Asoka column marks the spot on which the Buddha preached his first and most famous sermon, expounding under the sacred Peeple Tree the wisdom he had gained during his six years wandering in the forests of the Vindhyan Mountains, practicing Yogi, and resisting the Terrible Temptation in the Wilderness, as did our own Master the Christ.

The column is 80ft. high, and polished so brightly that " all who pray fervently before it see, according to the spirit of their petition, figures of good or evil." Its magnificent Lion capital, described by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Thsang as " smooth as jade and burnished like a mirror," is still almost as perfect as on the day it was placed here, and when it supported the Buddhist symbols, Dhauma, the Law, and Sangha, the religious order. Fragments of the wheel that represents the Dhauma are now in

a little museum close by, the wheel that is the great Buddhist symbol, uniting the Law, Order, and the Soul of the Universe, " Aum," the mystical word of the Hindu Trinity.

Buddha took this symbol from the older Brahman religion, for in one of the Upanishads it is written, " As the spokes of a wheel are attached to the nave, so are all things attached to life."

Other relics of this far distant time have been excavated. Marvellous sculptures representing the life of the Master from the moment when he left his home and joined the " Bhiksu," the wandering devotees, to the moment of his " Enlightment." And a colossal stone Buddha, representing him expounding the doctrines of pity and contentment, a really beautiful face, strong and dignified.

Before the coming of the Buddha the Brahmans had taught that only by penances and mortifications of the flesh could immortality and peace from ever-recurring birth be accomplished. But the Buddha explained that since pain was a necessary accompaniment of life, bodily penances were not necessary; and that those who really cared to, might achieve universal peace if they drove out evil desires, worldliness, and hatred from their hearts, and lived in harmony with the source of all life. Gradually, however, this beautiful and joyous faith became contaminated by superstitions, and in the eighth cen-

tury Brahmanism once more re-asserted itself, the Buddha being taken into the Hindu Pantheon as one of the incarnations of Vishnu, the Preserver.

As a distinct religion Buddhism has disappeared from the land of its birth, but in Eastern Asia and in Ceylon it counts its followers by the million.

Instinctively the thought comes to one, here in Benares, what would the Buddha, the " Enlightened " and " Enlightener," say to the rites on the Ganges, and in this his city? To the fact that within one of the exquisite wrought-brass doors of a large Benares Temple men and women crowd about a bull, its white hide black with filth, with which it covers its worshippers? That in another temple the sacred precincts are reeking with the odour of monkeys? Whilst in a third the practises are so ghastly that a notice is placed in English and Hindustani forbidding the entrance of English-women. Can all this be dismissed as " mere symbolism? "

" But was this place that is now called Sanarth really a deer park? " I asked someone. For somehow the name has a modern sound.

" Yes," I was told, " here deer were protected in accordance with rather a charming legend that concerns one of the incarnations of the Buddha."

" Oh, do tell it me," I begged; and this was the

story: At one time during the long period when he was preparing for the final exemption from re-birth, the Buddha, as he was to become, incarnated as the king of a herd of deer. His cousin was king over another herd which the Rajah of Benares was rapidly exterminating. So in pity the Buddha begged that his herd might take its turn in providing sport to the royal master. The Rajah agreed, and every morning a deer was sacrificed by lot from one or other of the herds. But one morning the lot had fallen on a certain hind in the cousin's herd, and she came to the Buddha and begged for the sake of the little unborn life that she was carrying that she might be spared. The king of her own herd, she said, had refused her pleading, and so she had come to the Buddha to entreat mercy. And in his pity, since only in this way could he save her, the Buddha agreed to be her substitute. But the Rajah of Benares came to hear of it, and he asked the Buddha, "Art thou tired of life that thou presents thyself for sacrifice?" "My lord, I come in the place of a certain hind . . ." and he repeated her story. Then the Rajah looked at him, and bowed his head with shame as he said: "You are in reality a man in the form of a deer. I am a deer in human form." And from that moment the deer were no more sacrificed in those forests.

In memory of this legend, and of the Buddha's

first sermon, that was preached here in the deer forest, it has been a favourite place for pilgrimages, and votive Stûpas (gigantic stone memorial mounds, often carved and guarded by colossal stone gods and figures of Buddhas) were built amongst its groves.

CHAPTER XII

BENARES

" How orderly it all seems," I said to one of the kind friends who now and again took me through the narrow lanes of Benares to see some part of the city into which few tourists penetrate.

We were standing at the moment on the river bank, on a platform near one of the upper temples, which from below, on the water, looks a mere niche cut out in the rock walls.

" You know," I added, " I heard such terrible accounts of the squalor and the general lawlessness of Benares that it surprises me to see how well-arranged, almost matter-of-fact the whole thing is."

" The river banks were rather terrible," my friend replied; " also the filth that was thrown into

the Ganges and down the Well of Knowledge did not make for sweetness. But now you see the bathing is under police supervision. Native police, but Government servants, and they keep excellent order."

" Are they a success . . . the native policemen and small Government officials? " I asked.

" Yes . . . on the whole. They are apt to veer between too little initiative on the one hand, and exaggerated zeal born of the desire for promotion on the other. That they are not above taking bribes is scarcely to be expected, considering the smallness of their pay and the fact that bribe taking is not considered in the least dishonourable. There is an amusing story of a Maharajah, who, on being told by his Resident that a certain native official in his court was cheating him, answered: ' But every one does cheat me throughout the State save yourself.' It occasions in the oriental mind no surprise, little shame, and if kept within bounds only a modicum of annoyance. Gradually, of course, as Indians learn moral courage, and as the Englishman in authority sees that they shall not suffer for frank speech, the police-force will become more reliable; but when you think that the head of the Municipal Board is an Englishman, who has it in his power to promote or to ruin the man, you will understand how overwhelming for him must be the temptation to take

bribes, bear false witness, or be over zealous or else negligent in the performance of duty."

" It must make the task of ensuring order and justice overwhelmingly difficult to the Englishman," I said, remembering some of the tales that Collectors and Judges had told me.

My friend's eyes sparkled. " I am not, as you know, a civil servant, nor have I any relatives who are civil servants, so I may say without being accused of prejudice how proud I am of the work they are doing here. The more I see of their conduct, and watch its effect on the mass of the people of India, the more I marvel that blunt, sport-loving Englishmen, credited with no imagination and little sympathy, are capable of the almost superhuman patience, wide-minded justice, and integrity that is the rule now and not the exception. Of course, the offensive person who looks upon colour as a bar to all friendliness, and thinks he is consequently justified in offering the ' niggers ' as he invariably calls Indians, any insult or discourtesy, still exists, but then he or she, it is as often as not a woman, is usually an unevolved and rather stupid person, who cannot see an inch beyond his or her nose, and neither possesses nor thinks it necessary to cultivate the art of discrimination. But thank goodness that kind of stupidity is at a discount nowadays. Anyway the average Englishman's sense of justice and

' fair-play ' enables him in the High Courts, and at the informal hearing of cases when the Collector goes his rounds far out in the depths of the country, to dismiss all thought of colour when delivering judgment. And this justice is the foundation of England's power in India. No people are easier to win than the Indians. Both their gratitude and their memory are longer-lived than the average Englishman's, and they literally do look upon the British Raj as ' their father and their mother.' Consequently it is a much more disastrous thing to break faith with or act discourteously to one of them than it might be to one of one's own countrymen. There is much that is very childlike in the Indian."

He also said, either then or some time later, " There is a tendency to-day to ' fuss ' over them. Kindly but misguided people get hold of some story of an Englishman ill-treating or behaving insolently to a native, and they shake their heads and talk about ' racial hatred,' repeating the story perhaps to other natives and tacitly inciting them to bitterness, if not to resistance, against the white bully. Forgetting entirely that these misguided actions are rare, that bullies exist in every race, and that more mischief can be done to both races, more racial hatred stirred up by repeating these stories, and by suggesting any superiority in the Indian over the English nation, than even through the acts themselves."

As we watched the bathing in the Ganges I asked why the Brahmanical thread was being shifted from one shoulder to the other. What, indeed, was the significance of the thread. The triple chord, he told me, signified the triple nature of man; the three planes of consciousness as it were. Also the control over body, speech, and thoughts, the knots in it testifying to the control gained.

Of course, many a Hindu who wears the triple chord thinks little or nothing of the symbolism lying at the back of the various rites he may be performing. And yet one feels that symbolism is still a living power to the majority of the people here. Their most powerful mantra is a cry to the Sun God in memory of the great truths that were taught their Aryan ancestors through the personification and symbol of the Sun. And in the remoter parts of the country buffaloes and sheep are driven slowly round the village, following the course of the sun from East to West, the people chanting a sort of invocation and gradually increasing the pace to a wild headlong charge. Again one remembered Celtic sun legends and ceremonies, and when I was told that among the mountain people it is forbidden to use any iron or steel implements when touching a sacred object, I longed to know the exact connection, if any, between the Indian and Celtic tribes. Here also, on the slopes of the Himalayas, certain

cedar trees are declared " holy," and little temples, rudely carved, are set up beneath their shade. Government officials of the woods and forests department are given orders to spare these particular trees, which attain consequently an immense age.

Many of the legends, of course, are universal. The story of the Deluge, for instance, is told in the Bible and in the Mahabharata, Manu taking the place of Noah of the Bible legend, and building a great ship or ark that after many days rested on the topmost peak of the Himalayas, and from which those that were saved went forth and populated the land. Creation in Indian philosophy is not one isolated expression of the Supreme, universes are created and destroyed over and over again, but it is interesting to read in the Vedic Hymns that water is mentioned as the first element evolved, the earth being a fiery ball of liquid that gradually consolidated.

It was late as we wended our way homewards through the narrow city lanes. Outside every temple the heart of the marigold lay crushed in the mud, and heavy was the scent of jasmine and tube rose dying after their brief day of sacrificial passion. A sound of chanting came to our ears, and round dim corners wound a procession of Yogi in their saffron robes, symbolic, as it is in the Scotch Highlands, of the Sun God. And mingled with their

chanting came a low, plaintive little song and the beat of the " dholak," the Indian drum.

" What is that? " I asked.

For answer my friend pushed open a door in the wall, and in the shadows of a court I saw two women grinding corn at a hand mill. They looked up and smiled, but their song went on, the pathetic wailing song of the corn grinders. And the dholak beat like a heart through its verses, that seemed without end or beginning.

" Are there many such folk songs? " I asked, as we continued our way homeward.

" Yes, but they are gradually disappearing. They are not written songs you see, they have been handed down by ear from one generation to the next. Some are love songs, some lullabys that all little Anglo-Indian children know through their Ayahs. Some are bardic tales, chanted at feasts and durbars to commemorate the deeds of heroes. Did you not hear the " ahala " in Rajputana? A song of many verses recounting the battles of the Rajputs? "

And then I remembered the night at Jaipur, when the Court musicians had visited our verandah.

" One Ram, Two Ram, Three . . . ram . . ." The keepers of the little shops on either hand are weighing their goods. . . It is dusk, and prayer seems to rise and hang as a cloud over the city, and for a moment the narrow alley is illu-

mined with a flash of the Yogi's saffron robe. " Union " the word " Yogi " implies. Everything that all the world secretly longs for. And I looked at these men and wondered whether they truly possessed that which can never be learnt but must be felt, in silence and humility, between Guru and shishya. How horrible were some of the sights we passed! Upraised arms that had withered to that position. Nails, four, five inches long that had grown out through the backs of the clenched hands. Eye sockets from which the eyes had receded! And yet, horrible, senseless as all this mutilation seemed, revolting sometimes, bestial, one could not help being struck by this evidence of a will power that can triumph over the natural love of ease and comfort.

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On the steps of our verandah I found a snake charmer with his bag of living tricks, and the strange whining of the haut-boy made my flesh creep. Out from the bag came sinuous hooded forms . . . at first timidly . . . then with a little slithering run that was indescribably horrible. Of course one knew that the snakes were drugged; probably they had had their fangs extracted. All the same I am afraid I shuddered when the snake

charmer took a huge boaconstrictor and wound it round his body. Then he placed smaller ones round his arms, throat and ankles, a small one inside his mouth, and a larger one wound up underneath his turban. Later on, to my horror, the man opened the snakes' mouths and showed us that the fangs were still there, so that if the desire had come to them they might have sprung at and bitten us or their keeper. They, the snake charmers, interested me so much or more than their charges. One is apt to say so glibly, "Oh, their poison has been removed. An incision is made behind the eye of the snake. They have been drugged." Yes, but the courage that enabled them to perform the operation on a wild serpent in the first case!

I am told that the snake charmers are a separate tribe, and that their power is in a great measure inherited. That they possess, as did the Egyptians of old, some mysterious power over these strange creatures that are undoubtedly the enemy of all the rest of mankind. And yet it is this gliding, loathely thing that is worshipped throughout India, and in the far north of our Europe. In Indian villages snake festivals are held at seed-time and at the great autumn festivals. Even the Brahmans take their part and receive a share of offerings, for is not the serpent the god of corn?

A power . . . for good or evil? The symbol of Shiva; the sevenfold canopy of the slumbering God, Vishnu; and as the thousand headed serpent Seshe symbolising Eternity. And then too there is the wicked serpent Kaliya; and the seven-headed Naga that is worshipped in the temple of Madura, to whom, as in remote parts of the Hebrides, libations of milk and sweet honey are offered.

CHAPTER XIII

BHOPAL

FAR across the central plains of India lies the native State of Bhopal, its red sandstone cities walled about with towers and mighty gateways, its lakes blue as hyacinths, set amidst jungles of palms and tropical vegetation.

It is about the size of Wales, and its capital stands amid low green hills, on a hill within bastion walls that speak of troublous times not so far distant, for the iron curtains of the gateway are still free from rust. The founder of the Bhopal dynasty was that Sidar Dost Mohammed Khan, who came with his wild Afghan followers from Terah, near the Khyber Pass, in 1700, and settled near Lahore, and then moved south to Delhi and Malwa, fighting with Rajah after Rajah, until, through deeds of bravery

and treachery, plunder, rapine, and sheer hard fighting he had subdued or exterminated his rivals in and about Malwar, and in 1732 laid the foundations of the fort and of the city walls of Bhopal.

For thirty years this wild and not altogether scrupulous warrior king lived in Bhopal, waging incessant warfare on neighbouring chiefs, and being buried at length in the fort that he himself had built.

It was his son and successor that was first known by the title of Nawab, and who took the sign of the fish as the royal arms. And it was a grandson of Dost Mohammed who gave assistance to Major Goddard in his march through Bhopal in 1778, in spite of the fact that his people were by no means friendly to the British. For the rulers of this central State have always been loyal to the British Government.

We arrived at Bhopal from Lucknow very late on a night in the early part of February. A servant in the royal livery was awaiting us on the platform, and in a few minutes we were driving through the moonlight down a roadway shaded by palm-trees. The air was soft and faintly warm. A delicious perfume stole like some definite presence out of secret gardens hidden behind high walls, or from the dim enclosure of trees.

Somewhere across the plain a pariah dog howled to the moon, and the laugh of a jackal, sad and unearthly, the sudden parting of tall grasses . . . a panther perhaps . . . all the strange voices of the night broke the silence.

The white walled houses were close shut, their windows mere shadows on a dead surface. Once, a hooded form stole cautiously from out a doorway, then retreated hastily as our carriage drove past. It seemed a long time—in reality it was fifteen minutes—before we swung through a gateway and drew up before a large colonnaded building white in the moonlight. Servants carrying lamps hurried out, and salaaming showed us up into a large bedroom opening out on the wide verandah, and furnished with every modern comfort. Leading out from the room on one side was my dressing room and bathroom, and on the other side was A.'s. The guest-house of the Begum of Bhopal seemed a delightful place!

We woke to the sound of bugles, and in a second I had thrown a cloak round me and pushed aside the tinkling beaded curtain which in India serves for doors.

It was like putting one's face into a greenhouse. The warm air was sweet with the scent of jasmine,

tube-roses, stephanotus. The soft splash of fountains fell through the garden, shaded by neem and banyan trees, beneath which were water rills and little marble kiosks.

The guest-house runs three sides of the large enclosed gardens, its white colonnades wreathed in a mass of climbing flowers . . . purple bourgenvilia . . . plumbago . . . and in the centre the Kachnas fling their branches, set thick with geranium-looking flowers, but never a hint of a leaf. The dim foliage of the mango trees contrasted vividly against the golden blossom of the umultas, and the pale soft beauty of the bakayun. Grass paths led down through orange groves to a tiny hyacinth-blue lake . . . and the chatter of monkeys, the call of birds filled the air. It was a story-book place . . . the white guest-house might have been a fairy palace in some enchanted garden, and we the guests of the Prince. We met no one as we explored the house and grounds, yet all was in readiness for us. A delicious breakfast was laid in a large arched room filled with subdued light from windows set high in the roof. Punkas swayed to and fro, and the white-robed servants in their red "kumabans" moved noiselessly, handing dishes whose delicate flavours and exquisite ingredients brought smiles of appreciation into A.'s face.

Later, a dilapidated-looking carriage with em-

blazoned outriders and an excellent pair of horses, called and took us through the city and up the sandy hill to Her Highness the Begum's palace.

The Palace is a large and imposing building standing high up above the city and lake, and surrounded by an enclosed garden. We drew up, not in front of the main entrance, but at a narrow postern door, which on being opened disclosed a small dim winding stair. A couple of curiously dressed men . . . were they eunuchs I wondered! . . . received us and signed to us to follow them up the stairs to the Zenana. Two more followed us, and their long black eyes under heavy brows seemed to watch our every movement. A thick curtain was drawn back, and we found ourselves in a large inner room divided by pierced screens from a network of rooms beyond. Signing to us to be seated, the servants disappeared behind the "purdah," and we were left alone.

The room was scattered over with a curious medley of native and European objects, some beautiful, some tawdry. Exquisitely embroidered Kashmiri shawls, and silver and gold tissues were stretched over archways and recesses. Jewelled vases stood beside china dogs of the mid-Victorian period. The carpets were from Persia, the tablecloths from Manchester. A pile of rugs and

cushions lay in one corner near a plush settee and a couple of straight-backed chairs.

Suddenly the purdah was swept aside, and a little figure, completely enveloped in a grey silk "boorkah" entered the room. As A. was present her face was also hidden under a "rubandar," a sort of coarse net veil that hung down to her waist. This was Her Highness Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., ruler of Bhopal, and on whom has just been bestowed the Coronation honour of the Imperial Order of the Crown of India, an order given very sparingly. She led us to a large velvet settee in the centre of the room, evidently the seat of honour, and seated herself European fashion on a chair near us.

I had feared that conversation with a purdah native ruler would prove difficult, but we very soon discovered that Her Highness spoke English fluently, and that she was immensely interested in a variety of subjects. First and foremost in education in its broadest sense, and as that happens to be a thing very near my own heart, we soon found ourselves deep in very interesting discussions. Besides, she had but lately returned from England, where she had spent the whole of the spring and part of the previous summer, partly in order to attend the Coronation, and partly to realise what she called "the great wish of all my life, to see England."

" As I do not care for, and am not accustomed to, the life of a great city, I stayed only a very short while in London," she explained. " Then I went to a large house with beautiful grounds that had been taken for me in Surrey, and from which I could easily travel to London and to other neighbouring places by motor-car."

Hearing that my mother lived in Surrey, and that most of my life had been spent there, she asked me a number of questions concerning that part of the world and the people living in it, and so accurate were her impressions of the towns and the scenery through which she had motored that I was able to recognise them and tell her, greatly to her interest, that she had passed my old home.

" Next time I shall go and see you," she said, and I could catch the glint of merry eyes behind the slits in the rubandar. It was so strange to be talking quite intimately to a person whose features one could not see.

If one could judge from the voice, which was soft and clear, and pronounced the English sentences fluently and with very little accent, one would say that the veiled personality was a very charming one.

She told me that one of the chief reasons of her journey to England had been to see for herself the state of education and culture in the West, so that

she might be able to judge how far it was suitable to her own State. To this end she stayed some little while in France, in Italy, and in Germany, " though naturally," she added, " my chief interest was England. For I never forget that it is to England that we in India owe the great increase of prosperity and the facilities for education that we now possess. You have heard probably of the dissatisfaction that is reported to exist here in India, the great wave of unrest that is sweeping over the country. It filled many columns of your newspapers when I was in England in the early autumn. And many people tried to prevent the King-Emperor from visiting India, fearing for his safety. That they need never have done, and it showed how little these persons understood the Indian character. Here, the love of the ruler is inborn in every man, for we look on kingship not as a mere post that any man may fill, but as a sort of divine right, so that the person of our Emperor is to us sacred, and even where there is discontent with some of the things that Government has ordered, there is nothing but reverence for the Throne."

And she went on to tell us that it had been not merely a kindly thought on the part of King George to visit India immediately on his succession, but a very politic one. It demonstrated, as nothing else could have done so effectively, his trust in his Indian

subjects, which would in its turn kindle trust on the part of India for England. And one could feel, as she spoke, that love and trust are our mightiest weapons. It was a truly Imperial thought to come straight from his Coronation in Westminster to his Indian capital, the city that had been capital alike to Hindu and Mohammedan, and from very earliest time had been the centre of Government. "This removal of the capital is causing I know some dissension in many quarters," said the Begum, "but I, an Indian, and one in touch with a variety of peoples and states in this great country, tell you that it was a stroke of great political signifiance and wisdom. For one thing it is the fulfilling of a very ancient prophecy, and that always carries much weight here in India; then, it has come as the express command of the King-Emperor. And it is good in a country such as ours, with our belief in and our reverence for kingship, that we should see the commands of our Emperor carried out, that we should hear his voice issuing these commands. I know that in England all power is not vested in the Sovereign, but in India we are still as children of those in authority over us. Here I am as their Mother; my word is their law under the law of my own Supreme Government. You who know the history of Bhopal will remember that I and my mother and

my grandmother have always been loyal to British rule."

She went on to tell me that in her childhood, when India was still in the hands of "John Company," the country was in a constant state of lawlessness and petty warfare, and except on the great trunk roads and the one or two main lines of rail, none of which came near Bhopal, travelling was very dangerous and difficult. Schools existed only in the towns, and the lives of the mass of the people was hopeless and degraded. But after the year 1858, when India was taken over by the Crown, matters improved. Western thought and Western enterprise brought with it peace and security; the present Begum's grandmother, Newab Sikander Begum, was confirmed as ruler of the State, and succession was promised to her daughter, the mother of the present Begum. In consideration of its loyalty at the time of the Mutiny, the district of Biarasia was given to the State of Bhopal, and every encouragement was offered to the people to improve their condition.

"I am not a very old woman; only fifty-five years old," said the Begum, "but as I look back I can hardly believe that the people and the State that I govern to-day are the same as I remember in my childhood. We in India are more adaptable than Western people give us credit for," she added,

smiling. " To-day the Indian mind that has come into touch with Western ways and ideas is very different from what it was fifty years ago, before the English tried to help and teach our people. Our people are very willing and glad to be taught, and are quick to learn, and we have profited in the past, and shall profit still more in the future by England's help."

And then she said what other native officials had told us, that sympathy was the touchstone whereby India could be best reached. That as India's problems are not those of England, it is useless to try to remedy them in the English way, for what may succeed in England will more likely have a very evil effect in India. And she reminded us of King George's words: " India must be ruled by sympathy, by understanding." " We have our virtues, you have yours," she continued, " and though, as you know, I admire the English people and our dear Government with all my heart, and have some of my best friends among the English, I do not think we can copy the English in everything. Some of your customs are not suitable for an Eastern nation. I read your newspapers, and whilst I was in England my kind friends over there took me about and showed me the interior working of things. And I could see that even in England you have too much liberty, and that such liberty would be very unwise in India."

" But is not that just what they are striving for? " I asked.

" A few, yes. Worked on by the agitators. But the great proportion of India does not want more liberty. It knows that it already has far more than it ever possessed in the past. India as a whole is satisfied with England's rule, honours the Government, and is ready I know to fight for the Empire to which it is proud to belong." And then she went on to remind us that for much of the dissatisfaction in India we have ourselves to blame, since much of the education that England has given to India has been too much on English lines. I remember she used the phrase " transplanted education," and added that it made neither an Indian nor an Englishman. It should be the endeavour of the Indian Government to educate Indians to become the very best of their nation, not bad copies of the English nation. To educate them so that they may fill other posts besides Government service. Above all, that the teaching should not be so superficial as it was now, where, under the English influence, boys were taught too many and too purely Western subjects, subjects too that were too abstract to be of much service to them in their after life.

" I consider," she added, " that not enough attention is paid here in India to our manufactures. Our handicrafts are beautiful and unique, and I be-

lieve that if our leading men, encouraged by Government, were to interest themselves in finding markets in Europe for Indian goods, a great impetus would be given to their manufacture. Our people can live much more cheaply than your workmen can do, and they possess as a general rule greater artistic skill, therefore our goods would not be dear, though of course they might be a little more costly to buy than are Manchester goods. But then . . ." and here she smiled as at some recollection, " they would last longer." She was careful to explain that she did not in any way wish to undermine the English market, but that many things that India could supply, England did not possess, and that it was surely bad policy to allow Indians to buy in India ugly and ill-made goods when they themselves could make beautiful ones. " Only all this needs co-operation," she kept on repeating; " we must all work together, and our sons must not be allowed to think that they may sit idle, just because they are sons of chiefs. They must throw away false pride and learn to be useful to their State and to the Government in every way. Not merely in just the one or two recognised professions of gentlemen."

It was the same thing that Chaubney Baynath had said to me. And he had added: " Government has done all it can do for us, but only India can really

make India prosperous. We are too much like children, depending on others to look after us. We must now show real independence by carrying out ourselves the reforms that in our hearts we acknowledge are right."

But the Secretary of Jaipur and the Begum of Bhopal are people who stand head and shoulders above the mass of India's inhabitants, at any rate in practical wisdom. If it were not for the English influence throughout the country, for English incentive to education and rational living, the people generally would be in a deplorable state. And it is so absurd that they should depend upon Western rule to fit them for life, considering that in their sacred books there are laws of hygiene which, if they followed them, would preserve the health and vitality of the nation fully as well as any Western laws.

The people of India seem to pay a great deal of attention to ceremonial observances of cleanliness, but very little to actual concrete cleanliness. The streets of their most sacred city, Benares, are reeking with filth, the bazaars and native quarters of almost every city are as unsanitary as a fatherly Government will allow them to be. The palaces of the rich as well as the huts of the poor are for the most part . . . well, scarcely as sweet and fresh as they are magnificent or picturesque. The people

bathe frequently, but do they ever wash themselves? Of course all these things are improving. One has but to read old journals or letters to realise how much greater the mortality was in the days before India became part of the British Empire. It is for India to carry on the work that England has begun.

CHAPTER XIV

BHOPAL

One way and another I saw a good deal of native life in Bhopal, and I think that the schools and the women's hospital interested me most.

This is roughly what the children here learn in the native schools.

The text books are compiled by Indians, and are issued by the Superintendent of the Government Press, Allahabad. Illustrated Hindu and Urdu Primers are used, from which they read at sight and then explain the meaning in their own words. They also write sentences to dictation from the text books in Urdu or Nagri character, and learn by heart and recite in English and in the vernacular. In arithmetic they learn the four simple rules, reduction of Indian money, weights and measures in ordinary

use, and work out mental exercises on the arithmetical rules already learnt, and that have a direct bearing on matters of everyday concern.

Geography is taught by means of a blackboard and scale maps of the district, special points of historical or natural interest being remarked on. Explanations of simple geographical terms are given, and once a week examinations are held on this and other subjects.

Sewing and calisthenics, flag drill, and a little elementary drawing are also taught, and a few study geometry, clay-modelling, and physical science. The children in the lower school vary in ages from four years to nine. Then they move to the upper school, where they stay until they marry. Some of the needlework that the children had done seemed to me extraordinarily good, and their voices sounded soft and what we call "educated," that is to say, free from any provincialism or uncouth accent, in the little dramatic poem that they recited to me. Then they sang me a little song, the lullaby of a mother to her babe.

"We are nine little mothers . . ." they cooed in their clear, softly-uttered English, and as the various little incidents in their mother-life was declaimed appropriate gestures followed. "But there are only eight children," I said to their teacher. "Yes," she answered with a wistful

smile, " the ninth little mother died of the plague last year, and the children cannot get out of the way of naming their lost companion."

The teachers in both the upper and lower schools struck me as charming women, refined and gentle in their voices and manner, their sweet steadfast eyes and clear brows reminding me of some of Bellini's Madonnas. After school hours I talked for some time with some of these ladies, and they told me that an increasingly large number of Indian women are showing interest in, and are themselves working for the awakening of their country, and in particular their country-women. " I am myself only thirty-five years old," one of them said to me, " yet I can remember that my mother was very much blamed, and I myself was much pitied because I was allowed to take physical exercise, and taught to read and write something more than texts from the Scriptures. Undoubtedly the chief objection to women's education are made by women, but then," she added, with a little smile, " that is because they know that nearly all men, either openly or in their secret hearts, both fear and dislike the idea of marrying an educated woman, and not to be married . . " She held up her hands in mock horror. " Some of our men, of course, are splendid. There is Professor Gajjar, our great Master Chemist, he has done much for us, and one of his sisters, a widow,

has started, with the help of another widow, a home at Surat in which some thirty widows and about fifteen unmarried girls live and are taught, whilst about a hundred day scholars come to the school for tuition. And in Poona there is living a very wonderful woman, also a widow, for they alone know truly the full bitterness of the widowed state. She, this Mrs. Rambai Renade, has opened her house in Poona for classes and lectures, and here the older women are trained, if they so desire, for examinations at Indian and Foreign Universities. Every year more of our women are becoming doctors, nurses, teachers and lecturers, and in one case, that of a friend of mine, a lawyer. And you have no idea of the terrible need there is of a woman lawyer. One who can go into the zenanas and see for themselves that justice be done to a woman client. And for that, as for all this movement towards real freedom, we have to thank the British Government for its disinterested help and sympathy. Never under native rule would these things have been possible. Only under a nation like yours that loves liberty and to a great degree has found it, could we also have found it. I have heard people say that the schools in British India are only a mill to turn people out clerks and small Government officials. And yet the same people desire to be those very things. They wish to take a share in the administration of

their own country. Therefore they should welcome the chance that these schools give them of learning to fill administrative posts. Only they should not rest content there. It is not for the British Government to persuade them to their own religion or the store of ancient Indian literature. We must do our part." And she drew up her slight figure with a little gesture of pride.

She was right. The English lines of education must be tempered by Indian thought. And I remembered reading a speech made by an English Professor at Cambridge on education in India. He said:—

"Human beings are like trees on which new stocks can be grafted, and the mistake of the education given by England to India since Lord Macaulay's famous minute is that it has tried to start with absolutely new ideas, and to cut off the students too entirely from their past. After all, something beyond the mere three R's must be given to Indian boys and girls if they are to become a nation whom they, and we who have constituted ourselves their guardians, are to be proud of. We have brought to them the inestimable blessing of peace, but it would be a valueless gift if we did not help them, and if they did not help themselves to realise the ideals that are the outcome of peace, and indeed that alone justify war. We have brought to them the mani-

fold convenience of life, railways, canals, hygiene, so that millions are not merely saved from death, but the lives that are saved are made easier and more honourable. But if the result is only to make their rich men effeminate and inefficient, and the mass of the people discontented and seditious, better far would it have been for India, and perhaps for England, that she had been left to internal factions and misrule."

I remember I once said to an Indian civilian who had been deploring these things: " Why then do we educate them, and give them a certain amount of self-government, and improve their land so that they increase and multiply, if it merely arms them, so to speak, on all sides against ourselves? Surely it is foolish policy . . . unless of course we mean to renounce India as part of the Empire? "

" No, it isn't foolish," he answered, " unless chivalry and courage are folly. We had to do it . . . to give them of our best; and if they turn our gifts against ourselves, well . . . we shall have failed and they will have failed to realise the true meaning that lay behind our coming to this country, which was not conquest, but coalition. We have need of India and she has need of us, and our part in the affair is to bring a progressive influence to bear in the coalition and to refuse to look upon

England and India as anything but two parts, very different parts certainly, of one indivisible whole."

And I remember another said to me, speaking of the King and Queen's visit. "Before their arrival, when the idea was first mooted, most people in England and a good many in India were horrified, picturing India as seething with seditious discontent. Now that all has gone marvellously, exceeding the hopes even of those who most trusted in this country, the pendulum of public opinion has swung in the opposite direction, and people are saying that India has 'settled down,' and that unrest is dead. But I think they are wrong. I don't believe that unrest will ever die, and if only we don't allow it to scare us into any weak policy, if we look on it sympathetically and deal with it justly, it need be no menace to us or to India. For we've all got to remember this. *We* mean India . . . now. What hurts India hurts us, and the other way round. Looked at rightly, unrest can mean, and must be made to mean progress, and is really the best evidence we could have of the quickening influence of British rule. The King has left us a splendid goal towards which to work—consolidation, and has shown that our aims can be the same though they may be sought by separate ways. A little self-sacrifice on our parts, a little on the part of India, and . . . well . . . a world Empire isn't such a

bad ideal to work for, eh? " And his eyes twinkled. Then he shook his head and added, " but don't think I mean it in . . . well in the ordinary meaning of the word Empire. We've got to go a lot further than that."

It was late when I crossed the enclosed court of the school house to join my carriage waiting in the lane beyond. Less than two hours before the sun had poured fiercely on the stone paths that run between huge bushes of mimosa and jasmine to the school, and I had been thankful to find shelter under the wide verandahs. Now, quite suddenly, the world had changed. Stars like huge yellow lamps burnt in a purple sky. An effulgence of colour suffused the earth and the distant hills, dim violet now beneath the rose of the sunset. Through the clear air came the cry of the Mueddin from towers set high on the hillside, flowing as a mighty benediction over city and country. The glory of colour deepened . . . faded. As my carriage turned abruptly out of the city by-ways, that indescribable thing, the Indian night, vastly deep, warm yet fresh as with strange aromatic spices, closed us in. To the left were sandy plains, and as I looked I saw a procession of camels padding noiselessly across the flats. Their drivers sat huddled between enormous packs. In the starlight I could see cumbrous-

looking rifles hung across their shoulders, and leathern water jugs swung to and fro. On what long hazardous journey were they embarked? One seemed to sense in them a world of adventure and mystery that is surely part of the romance of the East. In the courtyard of the " Guest House " the palm trees threw ink-black shadows over the beds of flowers that in the daytime riot in flamboyant exuberance. To-night their warm perfume filled to overflowing the enclosed spaces . . . essence of their very being made manifest. And as the carriage drove away and silence fell on the hushed, white pilastered house, a far distant chant fell on my ears . . . that came nearer . . . nearer . . . until it resolved into a kind of hymn or religious folk-song. It was the night beggars making their rounds, standing without some city mosque or courtyard and crying for alms in the name of Allah. They carry a bowl and a tiny lamp, and all through the night they beseech the faithful.

CHAPTER XV

BHOPAL

In the centre of the city of Bhopal there is a garden enclosed by high walls, within which no man has ever set foot.

Here Her Highness the Begum of Bhopal holds receptions for the ladies of her State, to one of which she invited mé the day after our arrival at the Guest House.

I drove there with one of her small granddaughters, a child of eight, but already possessed of the graceful manners of the Indian lady. When introduced to me in the palace she had come forward with a sedate little smile, and after making the charming Hindu reverence of greeting, had held out her hand to me English fashion.

" You will go with this lady to the Reception," her grandmother had said to her in English. And in English she had replied: " I am very pleased to. May I show you the way? "

Holding out her small hand, she had led me across the room, then, with a reverence to her grandmother she dropped the purdah behind us and guided me carefully down the narrow stairs that lead from the Zenana to the courtyard below.

Here one of the State carriages waited for us, the handsome horses and brilliant liveries contrasting oddly with the dilapidated finery of the carriage itself. In a cloud of dust we galloped down the hill towards the city, then suddenly we stopped.

The servants sprang down from their high seat behind us, there was a babel of excited voices, and in an instant a small crowd round us.

" What has happened? " I asked.

The small child, who had been sitting beside me perfectly indifferent to all the noise and clamour, lent forward and asked an explanation from one of the footmen.

" He says," she replied, " that which binds the horses to the carriage has broken."

" The trace do you mean? " I said.

She nodded gravely. " It may be," and she

sank back against the cushions, once more indifferent.

I looked, and could see someone producing a long piece of string, whilst another was splicing it on to the harness. In a few minutes we were told that all was well, and we continued our way to the city.

But very soon the string gave way! More string was produced, and the same feeble remedy was about to be applied, when I exerted my authority. Might not a footman be sent back to the palace to ask for another carriage?

And whilst this was done the little Princess and I sat by the roadside, where she entertained me as if we had been in a drawing-room, and she its mistress and a lady of the world!

She informed me that she had visited Europe with her grandmother, and that both Paris and London had pleased her greatly.

"I often went with Miss S—— to large rooms full of mirrors, where we eat chocolate creams and ices. And we bought dolls that spoke when we touched them, and animals that made strange noises. Once when I was in London I went to a place in which lived many live animals. Some were like the animals we have here, tigers, and monkeys, and snakes. But some were very curious! There was

one small animal that had long ears, which frightened me very much. I was told that I might lift it by its ears, but I would not."

"It must have been a rabbit. It would not have hurt you."

"Maybe. But to me it appeared very strange. I had never seen such an animal before, and I liked it not."

"Did it frighten you more than the snakes did?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she answered quite gravely. "The snakes will not hurt if you do not touch them, but this animal . . . ! And there were many others such as I had never seen before!"

For a few moments she was sunk in contemplation of the ferocious beasts that haunt England, and I stole a glance at the small, pale face, with its dark velvety eyes, singularly old, to my Western eyes, for its eight short years.

"What else did you see in England?" I asked her.

"Oh, many things. For you see I am not yet Purdah, as my grandmother and aunts are. But next year I shall be," she added with triumph.

"Will that please you?" I asked in surprise.

"Oh, yes. I shall then be as my mother and grandmother are. And I shall be married. I am already betrothed."

The announcement fell from the baby lips with no trace of self-consciousness, and I marvelled, as I contrasted her with children of her own age in England. Shyness seemed a thing unknown to this baby, though on the other hand she was not in the least forward in her manner. But from an early age, I believe, these quaint children of the East, children only in name, are taught that it is one of their duties to look after the guests of their elders, and throughout the drive she was a courteous, dignified little hostess.

On arriving at the garden in which the Reception was being held we found decorated arches, and carpeting of exquisite Indian manufacturing, which led to a gold-draped marquee.

Here a small party of young women, guarded by three or four older ones, stood waiting. These were the daughters-in-law and cousins of the Begum, with the ladies of the court.

The younger women were quite lovely, with pale ivory faces and long-lashed, slumbrous eyes, and hair of that blue-black shade such as one seldom sees in the West.

One of my English friends introduced me to the young wife of the Begum's second son, the one who is known as the Colonel Sahib. Her name is Sahibzada Obaidullah Khan, a very beautiful girl

of twenty-three or four, with a complexion that reminded me of a magnolia faintly tinted pink, and a figure lithesome and slender, with just a hint of rounded lines of bust and throat under soft confining scarves of embroidered muslins. There was a delicious freedom of movement, and a wild shy grace that spoke of Afghan blood, for she is a cousin of her husband's, being the daughter of the late Nawab's sister.

The Begum's eldest son, the Nawab Muhammad Nasrullah Khan, has married the Sahibzada's sister, but she was not at the Reception as her little boy was ill.

The younger ladies were most beautifully dressed in exquisite brocades, blue, orange, soft greens or sunset pinks threaded with gold and silver. Their long dark hair was plaited with jewels, and rows of pearls and uncut emeralds and rubies hung low on transparent muslin bodices. Some of them affected the Turkish style of dress, and one realized how fascinating the divided skirt can be.

Presently a fanfare of trumpets announced the arrival of Her Highness the Begum, and immediately the band played the State march. Without her "Rubandar," and wearing a high gold filigree crown, she made an imposing figure as she walked down the carpeted way towards the marquee. All

the young women rose and clustered round her, like a mass of beautiful flowers, then as she sat down on the great golden seat they sat just below her, and the garden became a " parterre " of living blossoms.

With a little smile, and in intense silence, Her Highness began her speech, translated later into English for my benefit.

" It was in this place," she said, " that I took my farewell of you ten months ago, in a little speech in which I told you that one of the principle reasons for my journey to Europe was to see with my own eyes the culture of the West, and to try to do service to my people through the lessons I might learn there.

" In the course of my travels I saw many countries, and many kinds of government. I also met many of the chief people of the West, and I tried to study their habits and ways of life. I saw great works of public utility, and many evidences of comfort and luxury; and the prosperity of the different countries, the evidence of their wealth struck me very forcibly.

" In England especially, through the express wish and the kindness of our King-Emperor, I was given great facilities for studying all these things, and I was immediately struck by the refinement, the sense of patriotism, liberty, and courage, and by the

extraordinary sympathy felt in England by the rich for the poor.

" Here, in India, our charity is too passive. It is apt to be confined to those of our own family, or at most of our own caste. Our natural selfishness and indolence, which, speaking generally, certainly exceeds anything of the kind in the West, make us acquiesce in evils that are fast being eradicated there. In England they are not merely ready to do service one to the other, but ready to help and serve all mankind. It is owing to the English that we have so many schools, here in India, more hospitals, and better facilities for agriculture and for healthier and better ways of life. It is owing to their sympathy and help, which we would do well to imitate, that we have better education for women. Their women are rational, educated human beings, who in their turn are able to train their children, and it is in a great measure to this fact that they owe their upright, honest characters, and their swift progress in various walks of life. For in England, from the palaces of princes and nobles down to the smallest homes of those who labour in the fields you find evidence of the training the children receive from their mothers. If only this ideal were implanted as deeply in the Indian character our people would improve physically and spiritually. Thank God the British

Government helps us towards this goal, so we shall only have ourselves to blame if we neglect the priceless opportunities and incalculable blessings they bring. I have returned from my travels an even greater believer in the justice, wisdom, and great-souled freedom of the British Empire, and now I long to broaden the horizon of the women of my country. Do not imagine though that I desire to free you from the customs that our religion and our national taste have dictated as advisable for you to pursue. Though I admire the freedom of the Western ladies, I recognise that the conditions of Western life make possible, and indeed admirable, things that are not possible here. In this country the custom of Purdah is best; but behind the Purdah you can have freedom. You can be free mentally, to learn, and then to teach. It is there that the horizon must be broadened. It is there that Western ideals must be introduced, and education seriously undertaken. For it is there that the children are reared and taught, and from there that they are sent forth into the world to make or mar their fate.

" In the West, girls are taught to cook and sew and nurse the sick; but here, to our shame, the few schools where such things are taught are due to the kindness and zeal of missionary ladies, or to the efforts of Government. In the West many ladies

can earn their own livelihood, and though I should not like you to be obliged to do that, I should like you to be able to show the same courage, strength, and determination in your home lives as they show in their public lives. I should like you to be able to fill your lives with something more than gossip and foolish ceremonies and superstitions. Do not allow yourselves to be overwhelmed by the great inrush of Western thought that is coming into this country, but sift it carefully and try to follow that which is wise, and to your benefit. In the East we tend to be fatally obedient to new ideas, without thought or discrimination, or else to be obstinately conservative. For the most part Western nations have discovered the medium course, and much of their prosperity is due to their care in this respect. Do not reject all our old customs and industries, and allow India to disappear from among the producing nations. In the old days women worked as men did, but to-day both women and men have allowed the old crafts to drop from them, because it seems, at the time, easier and cheaper to accept what other countries force upon us. That is foolish, for women need the occupations which they are allowing to slip from them, and this, our country, needs the industries which they are disowning.

" In all these ways women can help the nation, and instead of sighing, as some of you may do, for Western freedom, or foolishly condemning, as others do, all that belongs to the West, you should seek as they do there to arouse national consciousness, and prove that women can profit by education, and can in their turn profit their country."

Then she went on to give a slight sketch of her travels through Italy, Germany, and Austria, adding: " No restrictions were laid upon our movements by the King-Emperor or his Government. We were allowed to meet foreign rulers and enquire into all that might interest us, whilst everywhere our Emperor's ambassadors and representatives helped me with advice, or made arrangements with care and forethought for my position. All that is asked from us as ruling chiefs is that we should bear ourselves in loyalty and honour to our Emperor and his Government."

There was loud handclapping as Her Highness sat down, after which a tall handsome woman in a gold sari rose to thank the Begum for her speech. As the soft clear voice rose and fell, it seemed to my ears, ignorant of the meaning of the words, like wind among the trees. For a cultured Hindu's voice is very beautiful.

Two or three other ladies spoke, giving in a few words an outline of events during the absence of the Begum in Europe. Then Her Highness rose and led the way across the gardens to a pavilion furnished with cushions and divans and small brass and silver tables.

Her daughters-in-law, and about a dozen ladies followed her, and presently tea in minute cups, and all the accessories of the English meal—rolled bread-and-butter, sandwiches cut very small, a profusion of little cakes and biscuits—were handed round. The Begum drank several cups of tea, but refused everything to eat. "I tried to accustom myself to the custom when I was in England," she said to me laughing, "but . . . well, I am too old to learn, I suppose! The young people like it though. See how my little grand-daughter is enjoying her cake!"

I turned, and at that moment the English governess intervened between her charge and a rich-looking plum-cake, heavily coated with sugar. There was a slight altercation, then I saw the little thing put down her opulent cake and take a plainer one.

Both the little grand-daughter and the youngest daughter-in-law have their English governess, and there are also one or two attached to the households

of the Nawab Nazrullah Khan, and the Colonel Sahib.

The little Sahiba, married to the Begum's third son, is a delicious mixture of the Hindu lady, with all the attractions that traditions of seclusion bestow, and the free grace of the English girl. She chattered to me of tennis and croquet and her studies, which, she frankly owned, " troubled her." I asked the older sister-in-law whether she had been to England with Her Highness, but she shook her head a little wistfully.

" Perhaps another year you will go? " I suggested.

" Perhaps. I do not know. It lies with the will of Our Mother."

This perfect submission to the head of the house appears at first strange to Western ideas, long unfamiliar with the ideals of feudal life. Here, in Bhopal, the " Mother " is chief of a large State, as well as the Head of her house, but the same deference would be paid in less important households to the " Head." Age in this country holds great responsibilities, and therefore commands great respect. There is not here, there never could be, that rivalship between mother and daughter, or between older and younger friend which is a common absurdity in Europe.

One hears that children are terribly spoilt in India, and in some ways they certainly are more indulged than their contemporaries in England. The baby girls, betrothed almost in their cradles, so soon pass from the care of their own, perhaps too indulgent, mother to that of their mothers and grandmothers-in-law. As for the sons, the eastern mother has been so long taught that only through them can she gain recognition in this life, and hope of a life to come, that not unnaturally she reveres them as little gods. Ignorance, combined with the natural gentleness of the Hindu nature, makes for much of the " spoiling " of these little tyrants, but in one thing their training is in advance of that given to our English children, I mean that the smallest of the Indian children are taught the obligations of family and caste. In this particular they resemble the Highlanders of Scotland, indeed all nations with Celtic blood in their veins, and with whom clanship has been brought to perfection.

Very long ago, when India was little more than a geographical expression to me, a strange mysterious land, where Scottish ancestors had passed through hair-breadth escapes and shed their life's blood in the days before and during the great mutiny, and had returned after long years with wondrous jewels, and stuffs of woven gold and silver—very long ago

I had heard of the link that is said to exist between the Celt and Indian, the common parentage that is said to be found in some of their customs and superstitions. For, after all, the Celt is the youngest child of the great Aryan fourth sub-race.

Even the pessimism of the Celt, his acquiescence in fate, would be better understood by the Indian than ever it can be by the Anglo-Saxon; just as are his strange joys, so little material.

Tea came to an end. Two young girls offered the Begum betel-nut and perfume, without which no ceremonies in India ever conclude. When it came to my turn one of the girls took my hands in both of hers (how soft and cool seemed the long slim fingers!), whilst her sister poured the perfume over them, drying them with an embroidered muslin handkerchief, which they said I was to keep. The betel-nut was more difficult of disposal, for I had not acquired the taste for chewing it native-fashion; but I placed a few grains within my lips as I had seen the Begum do, and hid the rest in its little silver-embroidered bag within a fold of my dress. On reaching my room that evening I looked anxiously in the glass to see whether my lips and gums appeared to be bleeding; an appearance that every Hindu man and woman has through this extraordinary habit. But my gums were still untainted,

and only the little bag, the handkerchief, and the long ropes of jasmine that had been wound round about me on leaving testified to one of the strangest and most delightful afternoons I had ever spent.

CHAPTER XVI

BHOPAL

At Her Highness the Begum's reception several ladies had asked me to visit them in their own homes, so a day or two later I set out in the roomy old carriage to pay calls!

Slowly we threaded our way between narrow city walls, white, windowless, for in Bhopal one is in the heart of Mohammedanism.

A cry . . . and a door was opened cautiously. A question was uttered, a quick answer given . . . then I found myself within dim courts, cool after the glare of the city, and empty save for a couple of servants guarding the privacy beyond.

They salaamed and motioned me to follow them through the shadowy silence that guards the sanctity of womanhood in the East.

It seemed another world, a world of waiting and contemplation, whose melody is set in a subtler key from that of the world out of which I had come. Here might Maeterlinck's heroines have lived, where the silence seemed surcharged with so deep a meaning as to be clearer than any speech, and activities were sensed for which the cruder, material activities stood as mere symbols.

As I waited in a high, narrow, whitewashed room, dim, windowless, I fancied I heard the faint rustle of silken garments, and caught the swift disappearance behind a curtained doorway of some outlined form. Eyes invisible to mine seemed to surround me. A smothered call . . . hurried whispers struck my ears . . . or were they only the voice of the breeze, or some wandering leaves swept against the walls from the enclosed garden beyond?

The subtle atmosphere of feminism seemed curiously exciting; the silence, the air of secrecy . . . intrigue. Women everywhere, yet none visible! One could understand how this concentrated, unfamiliar atmosphere must both bewilder and attract men.

Then a thing like a shadow glided in. A brown arm beckoned, and I followed it down shallow steps and up narrow stairs imprisoned within white walls. I was in a long dim room, empty except for cushions.

It had no windows, its light came from enclosing corridors that opened on to courts roofed by a strip of dense blue sky.

Again I was left to wait, it seemed endlessly, for in the zenana it is etiquette to keep the guest waiting, to show that preparation is being made in her honour.

The trickle of water in stone basins, that inevitable accompaniment to harem life, came from somewhere without. And once I heard the patter of furtive feet, but no one entered.

All at once the bead-strung curtains were swept aside.

" How-do-you? " such a soft, very gentle voice, and one of my friends made at the Begum's reception stood before me. With her was her widowed sister-in-law, a child in years, but to whom had been denied the simple pleasure of that afternoon's amusement, for a widow never leaves her home except to pray at dawn by the river, or at some specially holy shrine. Her white sari was unbordered; she wore no jewels, and her head was shaved. Her food is restricted to certain dishes, and in the homes of the very poor the widows are the drudges of the rest of the family. So, in the East, does man ensure that long life be desired for him, and his death be lamented long and sincerely.

One by one the various women stole into the room. In some of the houses I was told that between fifty and sixty persons lived together: grandparents, children, children's children, in some cases great-grandchildren. For though the natives of India live a shorter time than English people, they marry so much earlier that a woman may easily be only twenty-nine or thirty at the birth of her first grandchild, and forty-five at her great-grandchild's birth. Then there are the wives of the sons and the grandsons, and in the case of a child-bride, one or two of her relations who live under the parental roof. This produces a complicated ritual of family life, burdened by minute rules of precedence that would drive the untrammelled English person distracted!

Perhaps it was owing to this patriarchal mode of life that the self-possession and dignity of the average Hindu woman is to be attributed. I was told afterwards that my visit to some of the zenanas had considerably fluttered one or two of their more timid members, but I should never have suspected this from their bearing. Their easy manners and gentle cordiality seemed to me wonderful in women so rarely in contact with any world but their own.

I had been a little exercised, on my way to see

them, as to how we should be able to talk together, I and these women of such alien races, coming to each other from such different worlds. But there is always one world in which all women can meet each other, one word that unlocks all hearts, sometimes almost without our knowledge or will. And the East is so completely the Mother of us all, that here perhaps the word is more easily said and understood. Here the little fair-skinned English child is indeed the link between India and England. At first timidly, then with obvious delight, these Eastern mothers showed me their children, at the same time asking me questions that filled me with amazement, until I remembered the Begum's words: " The root of most of the educational and moral difficulties of India lies in the ignorance of the mothers, whose development is stunted mentally and morally."

She at least is doing what she can to lift the veil of ignorance that is the real shame of Eastern womanhood, and if only Indian ladies would believe that emancipation lies in mental independence, rather than in wearing European dress and mixing in promiscuous society, half the problems of India would come nearer solution.

For, after all, what does it really matter that in travelling, or in entering a carriage, an Eastern lady

is shielded from prying eyes? It is only a convention, the veil, adopted in years of incessant warfare when it would have been actually dangerous for a woman to have been seen in the streets. And since everywhere customs are apt to linger long after the need for them has died away, one cannot but feel that it is a little bit waste of energy to tilt at these social windmills when other and so much more serious difficulties lie in the Eastern woman's path. As the Begum said in her speech, it is *within* the zenana that women must first be freed. It is mentally that they must strive for independence. The glory of Motherhood, which, from the East, has permeated the whole world, to become the ethical and scientific corner-stone of every country and people, must never be denied, but it is only when a mother is also an individual, honoured and respected for her own sake apart from her motherhood, that the glory is real, as well as ideal. Here the woman seems merged in the mother, and I remember one of my Benares friends saying that they feared the marriage season more than the times of plague or cholera. "For then the children only leave the school temporarily, but after marriage they are lost altogether."

Poor little mothers of India, to whom only one page in the book of life is known, and that one read too often for their own welfare.

From all that one hears, Government as well as independent English men and women are doing all they can to " raise," as it is called, the position of women in India, but, after all, it is little they can do compared to what the fathers and husbands have it in their power to accomplish—if they will! To the Hindu it would not be so difficult, for the seclusion of women has never been so deep-rooted in the national conscience as it is with the Mohammedan. I am told that in southern India, where Moslem customs scarcely penetrate, women of all classes are far more independent, and since every country takes its fashions from those of the ruling powers, Indian aristocracy is beginning to educate and emancipate its women, if for no better reason than that it is " chic " to do so. Through " White " rule India is gradually being brought back to her own ideals; for in the Vedic days women were given without question a consideration that they are only slowly regaining to-day.

After all, we found a great many things to talk about during my various visits to the Zenanas. Some of the things I was told were sad and pitiful, but some were so beautiful that one seemed suddenly face to face with a new world utterly removed from the senseless rush and vulgarity of Western

life. A world of dreaming silences born of the sun and the wind-swept plains. And as they pressed close to me in their eagerness of telling or hearing some story a faint scent of strange aromatic perfumes came to me from their garments, and seemed, for a second, to open a secret door into the Orient.

" What is that? " I asked, as a long echoing cry sounded through the dim corridors to the women's apartments.

They smiled, and one or two of the younger women's eyes glistened.

" It is the men from the bazaars," they answered. " They come with things to sell. Would you like to see what they have? "

" Of course. Do bring them in," I entreated, and in another moment there was a scuffling and bumping in the corridors outside, then the curtains were pushed aside, and a couple of ayahs dragged in an enormous pack. Bangles, anklets, rings, silken rolls for saris, gold and silver gauzes, jewelled mirrors and thumb rings were spread on the floor and held up for eager admiration and bargaining. The little ladies proved clever and careful purchasers, for me as well as themselves, insisting on my accepting several things as " remembrance." But without these tangible gifts I should always have the sweetest and gentlest memories of my visits to the women of India.

In one of the houses I went to, a large rambling house a little outside the town, I was taken through the kitchens and outside verandahs, where the ladies of the house busy themselves with household matters, just as women did in England fifty and sixty years ago. In the enclosed garden were herbs and spices, poignant drugs many of them, charms, I was told, to cure some real or fancied ill.

In the old days in India women were experts in the art of pharmacy, cooking, and other details of domestic lore, and to-day their skill is being scientifically revived. Not long ago, in one of the northern cities of India, an interesting cooking competition was held. From the very washing and polishing of the brass cooking utensils, to the preparation of the rice and vegetables, the setting and lighting of the fires, and the serving of each dish, every detail was the personal work of the girls. And in the schools here in Bhopal, instituted by the Begum, very much the same thing takes place.

" I want," she said, " my children to learn from the West real independence. To be educated so that they become really self-reliant. A certain amount of reading and writing and book-keeping are well, enabling the men and women of the future to fill useful posts, and help in the work of their State, but household crafts must not be neglected, and

above all religion must be taught. For us the wisdom contained in our great book, the Khoran, and for the Hindus their own sacred books. As for the missionaries," she added, " they are very good people. I am very grateful to them for all they are doing in the way of teaching sanitary ways of life, and for their skill and kindness in nursing. But in matters of religion . . . well, for those who really know and love their Khoran there can be little danger from Christianity." With a tolerant smile she waved aside the hopes and efforts of these good and earnest ladies, who, I am bound to say, in their moments of strict confidence and veracity, own themselves that the task of conversion in India seems a hopeless one.

In spite of the Salvation Army and other proselyting bodies, in spite even of him who, in the name of Christianity, has cast everything from him, and journeyed through the country barefoot, staff in hand, without money or food, India will never be Christian. The Salvationists are doing fine work amongst the outcasts, and Sir John Hewitt and others have indeed to be thankful that England can send such splendid men and women to care for those whom their own country-men despise and revile as outside the pale, outside caste. But one fears that it is only because their own people, their own re-

ligion turn from them that they accept Christianity so eagerly, so gratefully.

But what of the Buddha, who was pitiful and tender? What of the child Krishna? Are their teaching utterly forgotten in the land of their birth?

CHAPTER XVII

SOUTHERN INDIA

We left Madras with its well-kept streets and European shops at seven in the evening, for after all, to those who have only the six winter months to give to India, twelve hours is a very fair proportion to allot to Madras. In them one can see Fort St. George, on the site of the original fort, built in 1629, the year that Francis Day was given the concession of Chennapatnam, which was to have such stupendous results for the white race. A town was immediately built round the fort, and called the Black Town, a name since changed to George Town, and many were the sieges it sustained between the dates of 1629 and 1799, when the armies of the East India Company went forth to kill Tipu Sahib and take Seringapatam. Here, from this

Fort, Robert Clive, a new clerk in the employ of the Company, a tall lean English boy of 26, set off, in the absence of Major Lawrence, to the relief of Trichinopoly. It was close by that he lived in Writers Buildings, and it was here that he was found by a friend, so the story runs, heart-sick with the exile's longing and with the depression of uncongenial work. " Fire that pistol out of the window," he said, and on his friend complying with the odd request he gave a half laugh and a shrug of the shoulders as he exclaimed: " Oh, well, I suppose I'm meant to do something out here, for though I fired twice at my own brain the thing refused to go off." The " something " was to hand over to England an India that had been practically in the hands of France.

Coming from the more northerly parts of India, one is apt to forget how much France once possessed in Hindustan, and how nearly she, and not England, came to be mistress of the country. For France, too, owned an East India Company, first founded in 1604, and sometimes England, sometimes France, held command in Madras, whilst both nations played a not very honourable game with the various petty chiefs of Southern India, inciting them to filch yet more territory from their Mahratta masters, the price of European " help " being a not inconsiderable portion of the same stolen property! The Nawab

of Arcot from 1745 and onwards was one of their chief victims, and later in 1750, the claimants to the thrones of Tanjore and Trichinopoly. The English troops supported one, the French supported the other, without, needless to say, any regard as to the real claims of either side.

And through all the tangled tale of intrigue and petty warfare rings the name of Robert Clive. Yet where in Madras, his own city in India, is there any memorial of him? There is a picture of him in Government House, but so there is of practically all the Governors, Sir Thomas Munroe, Lord William Bentick, Lord Hobart, Lord Elphinstone; indeed of almost all the great personages connected with India; Sir Arthur Wellesley as he was then, Lord Napier and Ettrick in his peer's robes; Lord and Lady Tweeddale; Lady Munroe, a lovely thing by Lawrence. And be it remembered the hall in which most of these pictures are to be found was built by Clive. True, he was created an Irish Baron; he was Lord Clive. " I could have bought an English baronetcy had I so minded," he wrote to a friend, " but I was above that sort of thing." True, he accepted a present from Mir-Jaffir, whom he had created Nawab of Bengal in the place of the infamous Suraj-ud-danla. And it was this "jaghir" (grant of land) that was his downfall. He had made innumerable enemies through his reforms

of the Indian Civil Service, and they were only too ready to twist this gift, in which at that time there was no disgrace, since it was the recognised thing for the company's servants to accept presents from those they had helped, into such shameful proportions that practically no voice in England was raised to save the man who, to all intents and purposes, had given India to England.

In the little church of St. Mary's within Fort St. George, the oldest English church in India, built in 1678, Clive was married to Miss Maskelyne in 1753. Here also Job Charnock's three daughters were christened—Job Charnock, founder of Calcutta, who had rescued from the funeral pyre a Hindu woman and married her. And here too was married Governor Yale, who later gave his name to the American University. Within the little church are monuments to Sir Thomas Munroe, Sir George Ward, Lord Pigott, Francis Hastings, Sir Alexander Campbell . . . to almost all who were in any way connected with the founding of the British Empire in India. But there is no monument nor any memorial to Robert Clive.

Dear little church, with its rounded bomb-proof roof, a perfect example of a Jacobean building. It is well worth a visit, as indeed is the city of Madras. It cannot of course be compared to Bombay for beauty of position, though its long level stretch of

buildings, its belt of palm-trees, and hint of red sandstone under a wealth of tropical vegetation, is strangely effective seen from the deck of a big liner. The city lies so that it can be seen miles away out at sea, and as one watches it slowly emerge into view one cannot but feel a thrill of pride at the site of this earliest settlement of the East Indian Company, a mighty and dignified city now on the surf-ridden shores of the Bengal Ocean. We had come to it by sea from Rangoon, three days and nights of blue calm waters and fierce sunshine, in one of the admirable boats of the B.I., and I think this is always the best way to reach India's great sea-ports, for even Calcutta appears picturesque from the river Hooghly, Bombay is a miracle of enchantment from her island-studded bay, and Madras has a stately dignity and a beauty of fierce raw colour all her own.

The contrasts of India are certainly among her charms. To the tourist, free to choose his times and seasons, every type of scenery and climate can be found, and though a solar topee is a necessity practically everywhere, many a " cold-weather " tourist has never experienced greater heat in India than on a perfect English June day; whilst to those who love magnificence of scenery there are the Himalayan hill-stations; to those who crave for vast spaces or well-nigh impenetrable solitudes there are

the plains and jungles of India, whilst the socially inclined person finds dancing and games awaiting him—or her—at every " station," with its attendant " sport " for both male and female thrown in.

CHAPTER XVIII

TANJORE

In the blue grey of a dawn early in March we arrived at Tanjore, and as we drove down its red sandstone roads one realized that here indeed was the India of picture-books. We had left our servants and baggage at the station dak-bungalow, large airy white-washed rooms opening on to a verandah above the platform. For here in Southern India we had no friends, nor even introductions to friend's friends, and for the first time found ourselves sampling ordinary Indian travelling accommodation.

By the time we had finished a very excellent station-room breakfast, the day, early morning though it was, promised to be desperately hot, and the flare of colour as we drove down avenues of

tropical vegetation was almost unbearable. Yet it was the coolest hour of the day; on our right lay the full glory of the rising sun, to the west the moon sank in a sky of pale violet. A few stars burnt almost garishly, low down on the horizon. Birds of brilliant hue fluttered beneath the palm-trees, giving their strange calls that never rise to song.

Suddenly, in the faint, almost ethereal light, an immense dark shadow rose before us. It was the great gateway, the Gopuram of the Tanjore Temple.

It rose a hundred and eighty feet into the gold-dusted air; stupendous, horrible. Instinctively one felt that things ancient and very wonderful lay within. The awful veiled spirit of the true East seemed to meet one on the threshold between the colossal figures of watchmen, and to lead one down the vaulted corridor to further and yet more wonderful Gopuram, hoary with minute and ghastly carvings. For the gods of the Dravidians are fashioned most horribly; immense bulging eyeballs, writhing bodies, gross and malformed; a dozen monster hands and feet, pointed ears and protruding sensuous lips, a procession of leering figures jostling one another to the very summit of the pylon-like gateways.

Far above, on the square masonry that cuts savagely against the piercing blue of the sky, is He

who holds the secrets of Birth and Death, the great Destroyer and Restorer; but nowhere did we see one beautiful or gracious figure, everywhere lay an orgy of bestial exuberance of life or death. Beyond the long, vaulted corridor lay paved courts and dim cloisters, in the midst of which rose three monster conical-shaped domes. These were massed with sculptured figures, minute, but carved with horrible distinctness, flung on by wanton hands at the expense of how much ceaseless human travail! Millions of human beings have given here their lives beneath the sun's pitiless glare, until slowly . . . through the ages . . . there arose—this! A wondrous pile of mighty buildings, of monolith stones fashioned into fearful shapes, into sanctuaries of ghastly mysteries.

Narrow stairways lead steeply between gigantic blocks of stone to a small iron-barred door set high within shadows of overhanging masonry. No one except the priests may pass through this door. No one save the priests know, exactly, what desperate evil lives within those closed doors. Thrice a year they are opened, and the courts are filled with thousands of frenzied men and women crying to see their gods, crying with the exceeding bitter cry of men and women religious mad. And the great cars move in barbaric splendour, green and gold and dark blood-red, surmounted by a carved wooden

edifice, 20, 30 feet high, bearing gods and goddesses as revolting as any of those on the pylon-shaped entrances. The wheels alone are many feet in circumference, massive, brutal things that not so very long ago crushed its worshippers to pieces. Some fifty to a hundred men drag the car through the town to the bathing tanks, square green sheets of water set between walls of white masonry, as were the miraculous pools of Bethseda.

Round about the courts surrounding the inner temple and its hall are cloisters, within which stand Lingam stones, painted a greenish black, more repulsive looking even than those of the North, but symbolizing, of course, the same physical fact of nature. To them come childless wives, with their pathetic offerings of " ghee " and rice.

In a conspicuous corner of the courtyard, under a baldachino of carved stone, is a gilt image of the Bull God. So far I had never seen any noble conception of an animal god in India, yet in Egypt Hathor can be both beautiful and dignified.

Outside, on one of the smaller shrines, is the head of the Dutchman who designed some of the architecture of the Temple. The round homely face appears strangely out of keeping amongst the terrific representations of gods and goddesses, and the raised eyebrows suggest surprise not unmixed with fear.

Beyond are walled gardens, within which at the

cool of the evening pass shadowy figures that no one can see, that only the faint tinkle that accompanies their movements cause even to be suspected. Peacocks flaunt on the stone terraces, spreading their tails in slow ambling measures. The sun grows momentarily hotter, and the dust that always seems to accompany fierce sunshine enfolds the temple precincts in breathless oppression. Unbearable is the glare on the paved courtyards. Not a leaf stirs, only the jasmine and frangipani blossoms fall heavily to the ground, their scent weighing the hot air.

Almost blinded by the heat, we passed down a labyrinth of open courts till we came to a small door in the wall. It opened, and almost with a shock we found that we had entered a Christian church.

How plain, how poorly furnished was this little temple of an alien faith! No stately gateways here; no pomp or ceremony. Merely a few rude arches, a plain deal table set within a stone altar rail, and an oak desk supporting a large old-fashioned-looking Bible. It was the little church that the Rev. C. F. Schwartz built in 1777. Opposite the disused altar is a marble slab on which is carved the figure of the Danish minister. On his left stands his pupil Rajah Sherfoji, and at the bottom of the bed are the figures of four little boys, who lived with him and loved him dearly.

His was a beautiful life, beautifully lived. And how quiet and harmonious seemed the little church bound by its four white-washed walls, after the unclean horrors of those other walls, unclean in thought and deed. Once a year a service is held here, otherwise the church stands lonely, empty save for the wraiths of pious acts and words of long ago. But nothing that ever has been dies, and the atmosphere here is sweet with love and self-sacrifice, as the other temple, scarcely a stone's throw away, is heavy with gilt and shame.

Within the fort of Tanjore lies a vast rambling building, a network of courtyards and dim corridors, of winding stairs and overhanging balconies ill-kept and dank.

It is the Palace of the Princess of Tanjore, a solitary old woman, over eighty years of age. She is the sole remaining member of the once powerful royal family, the Cholas, a branch of the great Mahrattas. On the death of the last Rajah, his Ranis, there were thirty, of sorts, were asked by Britain's representative whether their lord had nominated an heir.

" No," they all replied, though they knew full well that a boy lay in a village not fifty miles distant whom the Rajah had adopted in default of a legitimate male heir. But if this boy, who was not of

their kin, was raised to the throne, and the palace filled with his wives and their relations, they knew they would lose what little power and prestige was now theirs, and so for once in their lives these ladies were all of one mind, and solemnly swore that their lord of blessed memory had appointed no one in his stead. Whereupon the British Government took over the State, and the Ranis were handsomely pensioned and allowed to live on in the rambling palace. To-day only one frail life remains. She never leaves the palace walls. She sees no one but her servants, who rob and intimidate her no doubt. Once a year the Commissioner pays a visit and satisfies himself that she is alive and entitled to draw her pension.

But one native voice, one frail old hand thrust through a hole in the purdah is, to an Englishman, much like another. So that . . . one wonders—?

CHAPTER XIX

TRICHINOPOLY

To A. the name evoked visions of cigars; to me long meshes of golden chain, soft, pliable, exquisitely, terribly frail that I had seen lying yard upon yard within my grandmother's rose-lined jewel box. How often I had handled them, those pale silk-like strands, as I listened to her stories of India, and to the exploits of the great-uncles in the "Nabob" days. During the two hours railway journey between Tanjore and Trichinopoly I tried to conjure up India in the days of the John Company, a task not so impossible as to recreate scenes in England, for here things change slowly, and every March the green level plains of rice and cotton, the lakes fringed by palm-trees and blossoming shrubs, must have appeared to those

intrepid sons of the company much as they do to us to-day. There are no fresh buildings on the gently curving plains. In all this ferocity of colour and vegetation there is scarcely a hint of man. In the distance rise hills, burnt to shades of saffron, pale yellow and madder rose. And the sun presses closer, until the air from the whirring electric fans seemed like the breath from some mighty furnace, and the walls that must surely be red-hot seemed to press one closer . . . closer . . . !

Suddenly across the plain a curiously formed rock shot into view, and a few minutes later we were at Trichinopoly. From the verandah on the second storey of our railway bungalow the rock came once more into view, and a little before five o'clock we drove through the palm avenues to the town. The sun was sinking as we passed through the cave-like entrance that leads upwards through the bowels of the rock to the little temple at its summit. Guarding the entrance are stone elephants 18 feet high, and gigantic pillars built out of one block of stone, appearing and disappearing in the dusk like phantoms in some underworld.

Every now and again the rock corridor would open, to disclose an altar and a flare of lights burning redly far at the bottom of a side gallery, in front of the ghastly form of the elephant god, daubed with red as if bleeding from internal wounds. A world

of temples, caverns, crypts, lay on either side of us, all dedicated to some monstrous and distorted form of the God-head. Gruesome forms lurked within this black world of shadows, slimy with filth and with the passing and repassing of nude feet and forms.

Here and there, through a crack in the rock above, the light of the dying day splashed like newly-shed blood on the ascending floor, and lit the grinning features of obscene beasts with lurid lights. Here and there flared torches, and the smoke of incense coiled like vampire forms round the colossal outlines of monolith gods; whilst all the while out from the rock temples and vaulted halls echoed the long-drawn cries of the Brahman priests chanting invocations two, three, or even four hundred years old.

A sudden turn brought us out into the world once more, beside a wall bulging with colossal figures cut out of the solid rock. On the further side of us was a sheer drop of 200 feet, and above us was a broad stone staircase leading up to the little temple at the very summit of Trichinopoly's great rock. Within the temple, behind iron bars, sits a gigantic representation of Ganesh, painted a green black, and partly enveloped in a dirty towel. Filthy grotesque creature! And yet millions worship it. I think one has but to penetrate to Southern India to be thank-

ful one is born a Christian, whose worship may at times degenerate into a certain amount of absurdity, but at any rate is never obscene.

Round about the little temple are open colonnades, between which one sights the plain lying below, immutable, vast, stretching mile upon mile far into the blue distance; the plain on which the blood of dynasties and races has been shed. The plain on which our own destiny in India has been carved out. Near here is the fort of Arcot, that Clive took with a handful of men on his way to the relief of Trichinopoly. Defended too, which was a more difficult matter, for the fort was in a half ruinous state. The French and their allies hurried up, ten thousand men strong, but the little garrison of half English half native, 320 all told, held it valiantly, and on November 14th, 1751, the French and their allies withdrew, with Clive in close pursuit.

Chingleput was taken, and then the campaign came to an end. For the next two years the plain of Trichinopoly became the scene of incessant fighting, and it was here, near the old fort, that a French soldier fell in the dead of night into a disused well, his cries rousing the English garrison, and the whole French attacking party being surprised and killed.

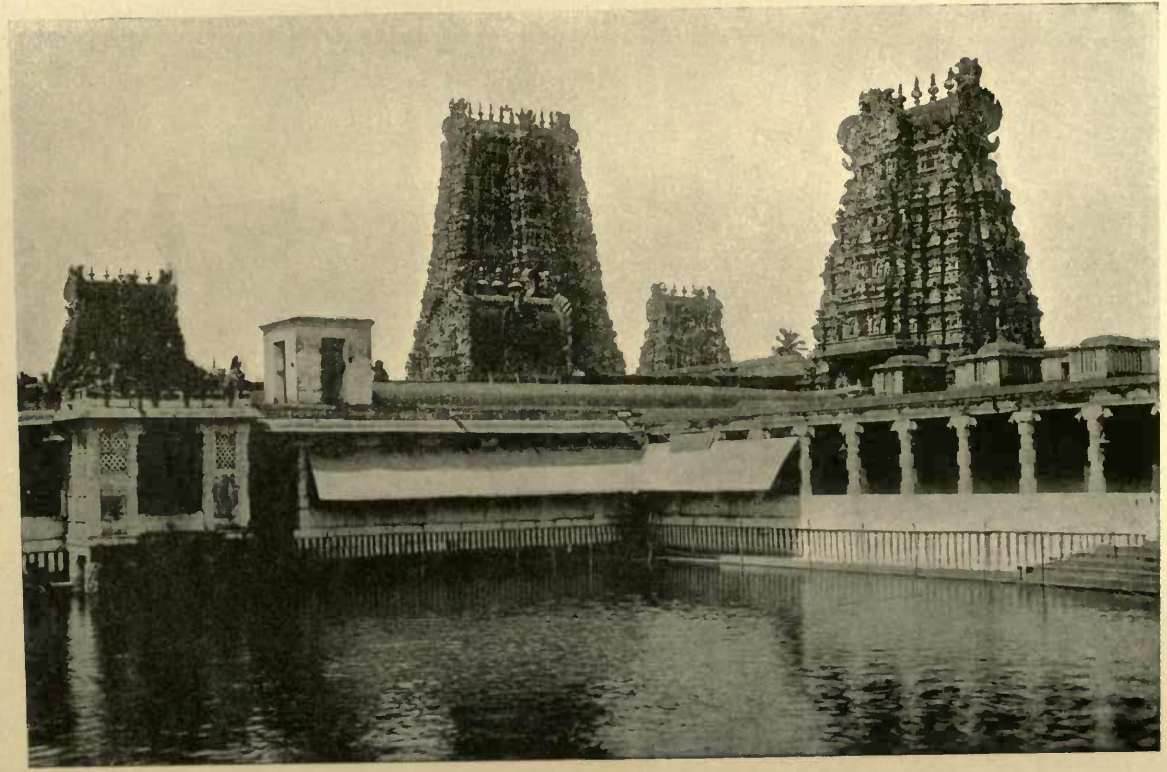
Back through the noisome corridors, dim and stifling, to the outer air scarcely less hot. For night

in March in Southern India brings little or no relief. The city was a flare of kerosene lamps and strange odours, and the beating of Tom-Toms sounded as an undercurrent to weird nasal music. Our white-washed rooms in the railway bungalow seemed desperately hot, and even a so-called cold bath, that in reality was quite warm, scarcely freshened me. Then we flung the big windows wide, and dragged out on to the verandah a couple of long cane chairs.

CHAPTER XX

MADURA, SOUTHERN INDIA

THE sun was sinking rapidly as we reached the temple of Madura, and the huge Gopurum with the carved and pointed monoliths beyond seemed dipped in molten gold. Behind them vast courts and galleries stretched into black nothingness, their monstrous outlines bulking through the gloom and throwing long distorted shadows across the open halls. The air was heavily still, moist and odorous. A hum came from the city, but the temple precincts were very still. Every moment as the light faded the outlines became more ghostlike, then suddenly . . . the whole gigantic mass of buildings seemed to force themselves out from the shadows and for one marvellous moment were dyed crimson, as if the blood of the millions that had toiled and died in its service had stained it for ever red.



THE GOPURUM, MADURA

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A second later and the glow faded utterly, and the huge wonderful pile fell back into its world of shadows, a shapeless shadow itself.

We wandered through a labyrinth of open courts and corridors down long broken stairways of ancient days, and past monstrous incarnations of evil.

A sudden turn and we were in a painted gallery flaring with lights and filled with the clamour of many voices. Small booths lay on either side heaped with fruit, sweetmeats, tawdry jewellery, toys. Men and women shouldered their way through, laughing, talking, quarrelling, crying their wares and counting their money on the very steps of the sacred shrines. On either side eight immense goddesses gazed down with calm abstracted eyes at the human hive below. And at the foot of the steps leading brokenly to the great gate was an image of Subrah-manya, the Hindu Mars, and of Ganesh, both wallowing in a filthy accumulation of dead flowers and candle grease.

Beyond lay a stone corridor, with colossal monolith pillars, the capitals carved rudely in the form of plantain and lotus flowers. Then came more dim labyrinths and a curious glimmer through the shadows . . . brass doors thirty feet high, lighted by silver and gold lamps and smoking torches. In these dim underground galleries the odour of decaying flowers and fumes of incense was almost over-

powering, and we were glad to emerge on to a wide enclosed square in which lay the Tank of the Golden Lilies, the bathing place of the gods. Its pale green waters reflected the starlight that touched here and there into radiance the white stone stairways, the bulky shapes of giants and many-headed animals. Yali the conventional lion of Southern India; the five Pandu brothers—Yudhisuthara; Arjan with his famous sword; Shadeva and Nakula the Bhima with his clubs, vague ghost-like figures looming through the darkness against black masses of gateways heaped in shadow.

The whole of this ancient and extraordinary edifice seemed as a despairing prayer against terror and evil; a monument to the betrayal of innocence and faith, and a manifestation of rapacity, lust, and obscene imagination. And in the pale light of moon and stars, and behind the shadows of the colossal walls there seemed to lurk some revolting and shameful mystery. India has been called " the divine land," for there lived in India, when Europe was still chaos, beings who knew and taught occult facts that have drawn round India for all time knowledge and faculties that in the West are still called " miracles "; and here in Southern India is the home of one of the " divine " languages, Tamil; the other being Sanskrit.

One can believe this, in these marvellous and

gruesome temples, believe that some terrible and strange force is at the back of their ferocious strength and power, and unutterable evil.

Believe that somewhere within their recesses are hidden spells and incantations, mysteries of alchemy written on palm leaves in strange transposed characters, so that, even were they discovered, their meaning would be unintelligible without the master key.

How desperately hot the night was! Through the scorched darkness the monotonous " scoop " of the punkah seemed only one degree better than utter black stillness. Sometimes it ceased, and then one seemed to suffer the tortures of the damned. Furiously I rose and looked through the little window on the verandah. The punkah wallah was nodding, yet in a second, before I could exclaim indignantly, he had sensed my presence, the punkah moved, and I crept back to bed to stare into the black void—oh, is there any night as dark as India's?—and wait . . . wait for the dawn. The sheet seemed to burn me. Even the enclosing mosquito curtains seemed stifling, yet I dared not throw them aside. The hot air stirred by the punkah seemed to sear the flesh off one's bones . . . once more I looked out on the verandah . . . the punkah wallah was lying full length, his

face turned up to the moonlight . . . asleep! Round his ankle was wound the punkah cord, but it moved . . . slowly, in his sleep. I called out sharply. With a start he seized the cord more tightly, and the punkah was agitated furiously to and fro.

" No, no," I cried, and I motioned him to stop, for the burning air was intolerable. Yet once more in bed the heat seemed still more intolerable . . . better to be fanned by fire than consumed by it . . . Oh! if only it were morning——

Six o'clock. Surely the day had come. I got up and stood for a while on the little balcony outside my bathroom. Not a glimmer of light in the sky, not a breath to lighten the air. And this is March! What must it be like, the heat, three months later? Surely that is a twitter of birds . . . how seldom one hears their voice in the far East, and in a flash of remembrance I seemed to be transported to England, where the birds call through the gently breaking dawn, and the air is fresh and lifegiving as pure well-water.

Would this pall of heat and darkness never lift? It became almost as something tangible that one would push away from one if only one could!

But a second later a curious gash appeared in the sky, darkly red and extending rapidly from East to

West. Day had come, and already the air was cooler.

I turned quickly and called for my bath, but short though was the time we spent over our dressing the sun had already transformed into a miracle of glory the red sandstone roads, the palm groves, the rich green of the paddy-fields. The dawn had passed as a fugitive, and already a new day was here to surprise and torment us.

How beautiful it was, in all the freshness of its colours, brilliant ochres, and burnt siennas, crimsons and cobalts. A passion of colour that would have seemed crude but for the marvel of this atmosphere.

Quickly the little ponies cantered us down through the palm avenues to the city that we had but barely seen last night, and once more we visited the great temple, scarcely less terrible in daylight than it had been at night. And then we sauntered through the bazaars, and eventually found ourselves outside one of the weavers of gold thread.

Their work is one of the chief arts of India, and never shall I forget the suppleness and delicacy of touch that handled with such sure mastery and perfection of taste the silken threads, and then entwined them in gold. Every one who desires to possess one of the famous Madura gold or silver gauzes, and who would not, for they are beautiful as a fairy robe,

as delicate as the mist, and as gorgeous as the sun glinting through its web, should stand awhile and watch the master hand turn the threads this way and that. The flash of the sun on the gold and silver twist is a joy in itself, and in years to come, when the owner is back perhaps in the grey lands of mists and cloud, these sun kissed gauzes will serve to recall better than anything else the wonder of this far country of enchantments.

Pale violet flecked with silver; tender greens like the breath of spring through the forests, with a shimmer of gold. They were spread out around us, yards upon yards, white and apricot and blue . . . how could we choose, when all were so exquisite? But at last the choice was made, and the precious folds were wrapped in a curious cotton muslin, sure protection against the white ant. An hour later the head man himself delivered it into my own hands at the station bungalow.

CHAPTER XXI

ON THE IRRIWADDY, BURMA

UNFORGETTABLE is the enchantment of Burma on first waking to the jungle.

It was half-past six. The air was cool, almost cold, but held that velvet quality that in the tropics foreshadows intense heat. A violet haze, so faint that it seemed as gauze, lay over the green gloom of palms and tree ferns, over groves of pine-apples and flowering shrubs welded together by garlands of brilliant-hued flowers.

The cry of birds, the flutter of hundreds of green and gold parrots, a sudden rustle through the jungle . . . this was upper Burma.

Three days ago we had been on the further side of the Bay of Bengal. In India of dusty plains

eternal as the sea, amongst a people mysterious and sad-eyed. Three days of blue waters and burning skies, bearable only by reason of little fugitive breezes that our speed enhanced, had brought us to Rangoon. Then had come a night and part of a day of dust and blinding heat, in a train that made one long for the comforts of Indian travelling, during which one lay with closed shutters sipping water that a few moments before had been iced.

And now . . . the jungle, and the blue snake-like Irriwaddy. We are on board a post boat bound for China, for Bhamo, that is more than half Chinese, and is distant only twenty-eight miles from the border.

A night and day of blue lotus life, of hot noons in a lounge chair, of gorgeous sunsets and sunrises, and cool invigorating breezes heavy with all the spices of the East. Slowly . . . with little perceptible movement . . . we drifted past paddy and rice fields, intensely, vividly green . . . past long reaches of jungle, dense and almost horribly still. In the near distance we could see sharp, conical hills that seemed to float pale grey in the mist. They reminded me of hills on a Chinese screen, and sometimes we passed a village of wooden huts raised on piles to protect them from the floods, carved and often painted in brilliant fantastic colours that again suggested Chinatown. Pre-

sently the river narrowed through a rock defile. The waters became inky black. The great tawny walls leant forward as if to engulf the little steamer, and the air was suddenly chilled to ice. As one looked ahead, the Irriwaddy became some long painted corridor, that was to lead us through a magical country to the East of one's dreams, the real East of romance. In the deep silence one seemed to hear the voice of the jungle . . . whispering its strange secrets . . . enticing with its hint of savagery, with its call of the unknown . . .

In a clearing of the jungle elephants were working, lifting with strange dexterity fallen trunks of trees. We had come out of the defile into a golden curtain of sunlight. Past us drifted floating carpets of bamboo, on which were laid little huts, like a miniature city of cards. Huge rafts of teak-wood made their way slowly to the sea. A cry came across the river. A knot of gaily-dressed Burmese stood on the bank waiting for the steamer. A boat shot out . . . they scrambled on board, dragging with them huge baskets laden with fruits and brightly coloured vegetables. Sometimes a would-be passenger flung himself into the river and swam to meet us, and there was laughter and much talk, for the Burmese are a lively people. Their native boats are picturesque craft, recalling Viking ships, with immense coloured sails, the masts made of two

bamboo trunks tied together and then drawn inwards and downwards, while smaller bamboo sticks are lashed across them to form a ladder. The slender up-tilted bows are carved into peacock or griffen shapes and painted in barbaric reds and greens, and the whole manned often by sixteen or twenty oars. The sunlight glints on the straight stems of the betel-palm, and turns the feathering depths of the tree-fern into a cool green cave. The forest of teak, and the clumps of strange torn-looking leaves of the bread-fruit are engulfed in a wealth of tropical foliage.

As the day advanced the heat became tremendous . . . blue . . . blue . . . it was all blue . . . sky . . . water, the very atmosphere.

Softly came the chanting of the sailors taking their soundings, for the Irriwaddy is a difficult river to navigate, as it changes its course every year with the floods. The hours slipped by. A golden noon burnt into an afternoon of heat and colour, between green plains and pale saffron hills. Then all was suffused by a flare of sunset colours . . . apricot and deepest purple, shading to mauve, to hyacinth, to opaline. The sun became an immense disc of scarlet . . . two minutes later and it had sunk to the mere point of a flame's heart. Night had come to the river and the jungle, a night inexpressibly tender, and heavy with mystery. Night birds ven-

tured out to the open, looking weirdly black against the lemon sky. Black too were the swaying palms, and the pagoda standing on a hill against the horizon.

We anchored for the night, and A and I and our two companions landed and explored the mysteries of a floating bazaar. These bazaar barges are hooked on to steamers at Rangoon, and at night, when the steamers lie up, the native population of inland villages and jungle huts crowd on board, delighted with the flare of coloured paper lanterns, many of them four and five feet high. They are not a shy people. There is none of the Hindu's aloofness or dignity about these small lively creatures. Their chief fault, so those who know them best say, is lack of grit. They are children that enjoy or abuse the present without much thought for the morrow. Lazy, merry, cheeky little people, how tired I got of their perpetual grin!

How still the night is. The Burmese and Indians are asleep. Presumably the passengers also. The moon pierces the jungle and makes of the river a path of silver. There is a faint rustling. Someone told me that at dead of night the beasts of the forest come down to drink, and one wonders, as a shadow steals from out the denser shadows of

the jungle, as one hears or thinks one hears a soft padding of feet, a stealthy movement through the long grass, whether some fierce prowler of the night has already marked his quarry.

A little wind had risen and blew softly across the plain. There was a sudden shrill cry in the darkness, scarcely human yet not animal. Could it be a jackal? Or a pariah dog? Was it that strange thing, a barking deer? Or perhaps . . . Here, beyond these desolate plains, within the recesses of the forests, elemental spirits are worshipped, and strange rites are practised in secret.

This waterway reminds me a little of my journeyings on the Nile, only there the scenery is more monotonous. Desert, and still more desert, and never a blade of grass. Here there is the tender green of the young corn, the rice and cotton plantations, the impenetrable green of the jungle. More villages too, and amongst those who come down to the river's edge every variety of creature . . . Burmans, Shans, Chinese, Hindus.

Egypt is but a strip of dusty land set between deserts. Here there is a vastness and a depth that both stimulates and soothes one's whole being. One is drenched in golden light that stills and invigorates the body, whilst the mind is alert as one grows con-

scious of the thousands of miles of solitary, almost untrodden, forests and uplands that surround one, and of the strange countries that lie just beyond and just ahead of one. Countries of fierce and lawless people, a people that, at this moment, are being driven by hundreds across the border to seek protection from the British Raj.

Cultivation in Burma is confined almost entirely to the banks of the great rivers. Here are groves of bananas, coffee plantations and rice fields—sunken squares of irrigated land that previously have been carefully ploughed and harrowed. It is grown almost entirely for home purposes, as is the cotton, which is pure white and very glossy; but no industry is carried out very efficiently by the lazy, careless Burmans, and their trades are passing into the hands of the Chinese and Indians. Yet the soil is excellent, requiring little labour or artificial stimulas beyond the ashes of past year's stubble, and besides cotton, rice, tobacco, and teak-wood, the country possess ruby and coal mines, as well as jade, amber and marble quarries. Only the Burman will never, if he can possibly help it, enter into any contract work. If he works, it must be at his own time and convenience. Here, unlike India, the caste system does not exist. Everyone seems very " affable " with everyone else, and the women, far from being secluded, are paramount everywhere. They are

said to be clever business women, their earnings are their own, and they have a recognised status in the country.

A man may have more than one wife, but he seldom does, for divorce is easy, and marriage lies lightly on the people. The women are pretty little things, for those who like the Japanese style of beauty—narrow slanting eyes, broad high cheek-bones, and diminutive figures. The men are such effeminate looking creatures that I was continually mistaking one sex for the other, for there is nothing in their dress to help one to distinguish them.

Both sexes wear their hair long; either screwed up on the top of their heads or hanging half-way down their backs. A muslin blouse is worn over a silk or cotton petticoat, the sash of which is tied, in the case of the man in the centre front, in the woman's case at the side. Each sex carries a Chinese parasol. Some of the petticoats are of silk and are quite exquisite in colouring.

We saw a pale green one merging just at the knees into a deep soft purple. Another was apricot and pink. A third was silver and mauve, and many recalled the picture of the Burmese beauty, various tints blending deliciously one into the other. Unfortunately, silk is no longer the rule, and even when it is used the Burmese seem to see no difference between the crude chemical dyes of the Manchester

goods and their own delicious vegetable colours. Very tight are these quaint little petticoats, tighter far than our late fashions in skirts, so that a shuffle is all that the Burmese man or woman can do in the way of a walk. I recalled the graceful swaying carriage of the Indian woman in her loosely flowing sari, and the long tunics and flowing linen of the men, and then I looked at these little shuffling pigmies——!

They are a sunny-natured, amiable people though, whom a famous writer has endowed with many virtues. Here those two barbarous customs of India—infant marriage and ostracism of widows —has never prevailed. Their religion, a legacy from India, makes of them a tender-hearted and less bigoted people. Their pagodas, even to the holy of holies, are open to strangers of alien religions, and nothing delights their monks and priests more than a discussion on their own or other people's faith. In the monastic schools and monasteries at Mandalay and Rangoon I had many interesting talks with the yellow-robed fraternity. Practically every male is, or has been, a novice in the many " pongyi kyaung " scattered throughout the country. Sometimes they stay only a few weeks in the monastery, sometimes they remain to become " pongys " and study and teach the great Buddhist literature. In many a monastery school, raised high above the

moist damp-heat of palm gardens, cool within and very dim, have I seen a ring of boys and girls clustered round some gentle-faced "pongy," repeating after him in musical tones some simple form of grammar or spelling.

If India may be said to have given Burma her religion, China has for the most part become her social godmother. From China have come the Burmese customs, art, and flat features. The Burmese are, of course, Mongolians, divided at one time into eight different states always at war one with the other. Portugal tried to discipline them on the conclusion of a treaty with the King of Pegu, a town we passed on our passage up the Irriwaddy. This was in 1520, and Portuguese factories were established at Martaban and Syrium. Seventy years later the Dutch appeared, and without dispossessing the Portuguese settled on the island of Negrain. A little later, to be precise, in 1620, the English East Indian Company built factories at Syrium, Prome, and Ava. Finally, the French arrived on the scene, and they and the English merchants were invited to settle in Syrium and Pegu, and even to send a commercial resident.

But all the while the various states were fighting with each other, and in their excitement they now and again murdered an Englishman, and now and again a Frenchman. Then one day, emboldened

perhaps with local successes, the Burmese crossed the border and invaded Manipur and Assam. The British lion was roused, and in 1824 declared war with the insolent little neighbour. Back through Cachar, Bengal, and Manipur they were driven, British troops at their heels, to far up the river Irriwaddy; then a commercial treaty was signed at Ava, and a British Resident appointed to the Burmese capital. But the lesson had not yet been learnt, and the little people still continued to tickle the lion's whiskers. Ghastly outrages were committed on British subjects, and in 1852 war was again declared.

Pegu, being the centre of the atrocities, the whole province was at length annexed, but ten years were to pass and a plentitude of blood was shed before the four offending provinces of Arakon, Martaban, Pegu, and Tenasserim were welded together under the title of "British Burma." Then followed the period of the Thebaw horrors, still fresh in many memories. King Thebaw inaugurated his reign by executing and torturing the greater part of the Royal Family, afterwards proceeding to insult the British Resident. British Burma, owing to the laxity with which the King held Upper Burma, was threatened with much of the disorder that reigned in the natives states, and a sharp reprimand was given the King, who, furious at this show of inter-

ference, actually despatched embassies to two other European Courts. This being in clear defiance of signed treaties, and it being discovered that a fine of £20,000 had been imposed on the Bombay Burma Trading Company, an ultimatum was placed before King Thebaw.

His answer was a proclamation issued throughout the country calling on his subjects to " drive the white devils into the sea," though he knew that in the event of the ultimatum being rejected, an immediate advance on Mandalay would be made. Did he not believe in the threat? Or did he imagine himself so powerful as to be able to flout " the English Devils? " Be that as it may, General Prendergast besieged and took Mandalay, and immediately afterwards Lord Dufferin crossed to Burma, and from its old capital, Mandalay, announced the annexation by England of King Thebaw's territory. His title of " Ava " was taken from the city of that name, situated some ten or twelve miles from Mandalay.

The famous twin cities of Ava and Sagaing lie now in ruins, white and pale rose over the hillside on either side of the great river. Hundreds of pagodas of every size, and some of them beautifully and wonderfully painted, rise thick as a forest. Here is the famous dragon-shaped building of the

Nagayon Paya; and the colossal domed Kaunghmudaw with its golden spurs flashing in the sun. A wondrous city that once was the capital of Burma (1822 to 1837).

CHAPTER XXII

ON THE UPPER REACHES OF THE IRRIWADDY

ALL night we had lain outside Bhamo, a village only thirty miles from the Chinese frontier, and turned for the moment into a veritable China town with its hundreds of Chinese refugees. The first thing that met us on landing was a convoy of Chinese prisoners, tied one to the other by their pig-tails and led thereby to prison. Beyond, we found Chinese-looking shops hung with lanterns of brilliant hue, the very immense red lanterns denoting pawnshops. Frail bamboo shanties were raised on piles above the ground; chow pariah dogs perambulated the roads; tiny brown Mongolian babies sat gravely in the dust whilst their fathers and mothers ground corn with a quaint wooden contrivance worked by the foot. We wandered on, through leafy lanes of cocoa-nut

palms in a heaven of light and colour, flooding sky and fields and the mighty Irriwaddy, a world it seemed of enchantment.

One felt that here in these tropical jungles and clearings, this wondrous luxuriance of palms, ferns, sugar canes, flowers and trees of every description, here in this magical light, lay the true glamour of the East, the secret of youth, the divine passion tender and unquenchable that was in the beginning and that shall be evermore. A deep track lay across the low sandy plains. It is the caravan route to China, and fierce men seated high on camels bring from that distant land bales of wondrous coloured silks and cottons, fiery tasting liquors, and opium.

That night we visited the Chinese Joss-house, entering by narrow courts that here and there were in a flare of light from gigantic lanterns, but for the most part dim, foul, terrible looking.

In a dark and incense-laden hall stood, one on each side of the altar, a Chinese god and goddess, more than life size, holding swords of curious workmanship, and gazing before them with a stare of frantic ferocity. Within the altar rails, lying full length before the altar was a Chinese under the effects of morphia, his loosely-parted coat showing the dirty waxen tint of his belly, splashed with blood and heaving gently to and fro as he breathed.

In an adjacent courtyard to the left there was a

longish table at which some dozens of Chinese were seated gambling with a sort of strange heavy ferocity. One or two of them looked up at us, scowling and making as if to order us away by threats or . . . but we were in British Burma, not China. Nevertheless, the native policeman beckoned to us to move away.

A few more steps led up to another hall, where, in the fast fading light, we could see the recumbent forms of opium-smokers. Around this room, at the height of about eight feet, a row of gilt masks peered horribly through the shadows. We were told that they represented evil spirits, and they certainly looked evil enough. One, with a gross and bloodthirsty face, had an arm that terminated in claws; another, whose forehead and cheeks were tightened into seams, looked as if he were half strangled by evil emotions—lust of pain and blood. They were astral horrors, like awful faces seen in the pit of some morphia dream.

CHAPTER XXIII

RANGOON

On our return to Rangoon we stayed there a few days in order to see the great Shwe Pagoda. A flight of a hundred steps leads to the platform on which it is built.

On either side of the long ascent lie fruit and flower stalls, bazaars for sacred pictures, candles, toys, gongs, all the religious merchandise that one associates with Italian and Spanish places of worship.

We seemed to have stepped into Alladin's country; a fantastic world of pagodas glittering with hanging jewels; of poles encrusted with silver and gold; of strangely fashioned pagodas scintillating with emeralds and sapphires. Everywhere were life-sized Buddhas in marble or porphyry, their pale

saffron robes edged with a circle of jewels, which burnt a soft effulgence of sacred colour in the full blaze of the setting sun.

A procession of them receded into the violet gloom of incense-laden shrines. A flicker of many candles, the shadow of swaying pendulous jewels passed over their faces, which seemed to move, almost to speak. Above them hung parasols of gold or silver, the Eastern mark of homage. The points were hung with jewels, which swung this way and that in the sun. Deep porches of carved teak-wood, black with age and smoke, projected into this world of rampant colour. Their roofs and eaves were painted gorgeous vermilion, and from them suspended spirals of silver and gold, as if they had been magic caves with molten metal for icicles.

Within the shrine hung stupendous bunches of roses and giant lanterns of coloured glass. In one corner was a casket of wrought bronze inlaid with jewels. In another swayed punkahs of rich silk, purple and pale green, marvellous Chinese blues and sunset pinks. An immense silver canopy was so thickly pressed with flowers as to appear a bed of roses and narcissi.

Up the long stairways and down incense-blurred corridors were colossal pillars of dull red, their capitals painted with gold-leaf and encrusted with crystals. One was allowed to look everywhere;

even behind the golden statues of Buddha that are so mighty that one must climb up winding stairs, concealed at the back, from which to see them. A few of the faces are extraordinarily impressive. Strong, calm, spiritual. The rest are weak and sensual. Everywhere pushed a multitude of gaily-dressed worshippers, like flowers bending this way and that in the breeze, so small, so alert, fireflies of humanity, their lives spent in the sun.

The chiming of celestial gongs heralded processions of yellow-robed monks. They held out their little wooden bowls for alms, but with such courteous grace that one gladly added to their pittance. Then they disappeared within some shrine large as a chapel, and we followed them out of the blinding light of the jewelled, sunlit world to a cloistered gloom that at first yielded only the flicker of tapers, and the golden outline of the presiding Buddha. But far at the end of the shrine glowed a point of colour. We drew nearer . . . It was only the rose and purple glory of lotus blossoms; the starry mass of jasmine; the wax-like purity of tube-roses.

THE END

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